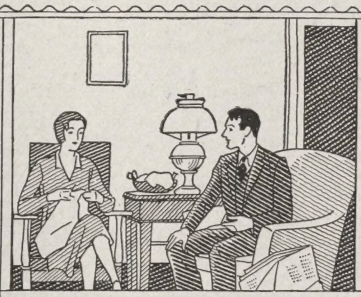
TALES OF
MAGIC
AND MYSTERY
"The Miracle Man of Benares"
by HOWARD THURSTON
December 25¢

FORMER PLASTERER NOW MAKING $12,000 A YEAR

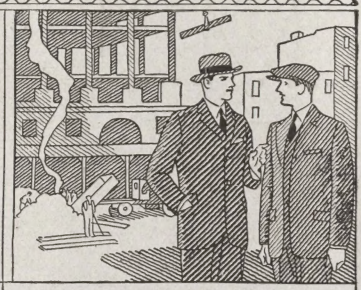
Worked for Small Salary

Henry J. Beilman had little education and little opportunity to get ahead, but he refused to give up. Deep within him was the longing to make something of his life before it was too late—to *build* a building some day instead of tinkering around it as a plasterer or bricklayer.



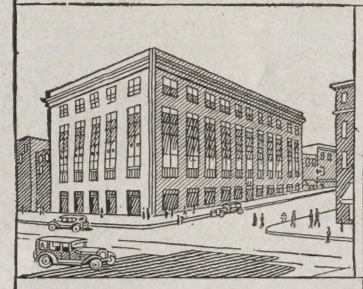
Resolves to Earn More Money

"If spare time study can help other men to get out of the rut," he said, "it can help me. I'm going to take up a course with the International Correspondence Schools and study at home. It's the only way I can ever hope to put myself on a par with technically trained men."



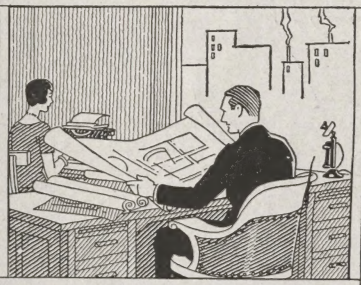
Gets Offer from Contractor

Beilman's friends laughed at him and said he was wasting his time, but he kept right on studying, for he could see how the course was helping him in his work. Soon one of the leading contractors heard about "this bright young man" and made him superintendent at a fine increase in salary.



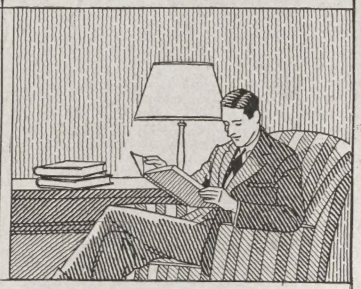
Secures Big Contract

Beilman went ahead so rapidly that he decided to start a business of his own. He met with unusual success from the very start and today his income is "more than $12,000 a year." Recently he handled the contracting work of the new $800,000 Chamber of Commerce building in Scranton.



Glad He Studied at Home

"I give the International Correspondence Schools full credit for my success," Mr. Beilman writes; "there is nothing better for the man who has been deprived of the advantages of a college education. Many of my friends also give the I. C. S. full credit for their ability to do their work efficiently and well."



The Secret of His Success

Henry J. Beilman is a successful man today because he had vision—ambition—and perseverance. He realized that he had to *learn* more before he could *earn* more. Instead of just drifting along, he picked a definite goal and then worked and strived until he made his dreams come true.

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Ye who enter here shall engage in many strange explorations into the unknown, as entertainingly set down in
Tales of Magic and Mystery
Volume One Number One

Tales of MAGIC

DECEMBER
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Strange Stories of Ingenuity, Black Art, the Unknown—Lives and Adventures of Authoritative Articles on

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Easy Magic You Can Do 54

A department which regularly each month will explain the presentation and secret of a number of good tricks.

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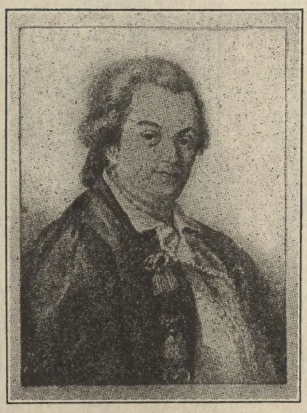
Strange Personalities

The First

By ALFRED



Joseph Balsamo, otherwise known as Count Cagliostro

JOSEPH BALSAMO, self-styled Count of Cagliostro, was one of the most mysterious personages of all time. Rising from obscurity, he was lionized by members of the French court during the last days of the monarchy. He claimed to have found the elixir of life, which, he said, enabled him to live for centuries; and he also claimed possession of the philosopher's stone, which had the reputed power of transmuting lead to gold.

Many prominent persons believed in the sorcery and alchemy of Cagliostro. The Cardinal de Rohan, successor of Richelieu, considered him to be genuine. Cagliostro gave many remarkable seances, where he summoned the shades of famous persons, and indulged in feats of clairvoynacy.

His enemies denounced him as an impostor; but he had powerful friends who believed in him implicitly. He was idolized by the common people, who looked upon him as a great physician. He gained power, fame and fortune in France until he was implicated in the theft of a diamond necklace intended for Queen Marie Antoinette.

Brought to trial, Cagliostro ably defended himself, and was acquitted. But he was forced to leave the country. He went to England and travelled through Europe, but met with ill-success, and was finally imprisoned in Italy, where he is supposed to have died.

Madame Blavatsky

Madame Blavatsky

ONE of the most remarkable persons of modern times was Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the modern Priestess of Isis, and the founder of the Theosophical Society.

Born in the year 1831, this woman spent an eventful childhood filled with strange reports of her mediumship and clairvoyancy. In 1848 she married Count Blavatsky, a Russian general fifty years her senior. She left him after a brief period, and began her career as a mysticist.

She travelled in the Orient, and claimed to have reached the mysterious city of L'Hassa, in Tibet. There, she announced, she became the disciple of the mahatmas, strange, mysterious personages who had lived for centuries.

As messenger extraordinary of the mahatmas, Madame Blavatsky returned to Europe and America, bringing a doctrine of reincarnation, and setting forth her teachings in a huge volume entitled "Isis Unveiled." She founded Theosophical Societies in England, America, and India. She won many prominent converts to

of the Past and Present

of a Series
MAURICE

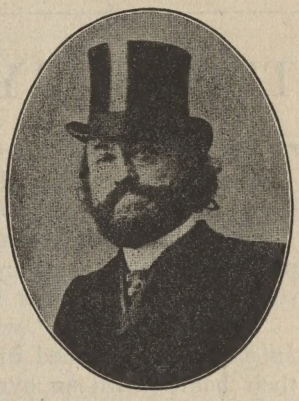
her cult, but also aroused the antagonism of those who refused to take her teachings seriously, and who attempted to expose her as a fraud.

During her life she frequently received letters from the mahatmas, which were deemed authentic by her followers but denounced by her enemies. Her death, in 1891, ended one of the strangest careers on record.

Buatier de Kolta

ONE of the greatest of modern mystifiers was Buatier de Kolta. Since his death, in 1903, his name has been forgotten by the general public; yet as a magical genius he ranked with Herrmann and Kellar as the really great wonder workers of his day.

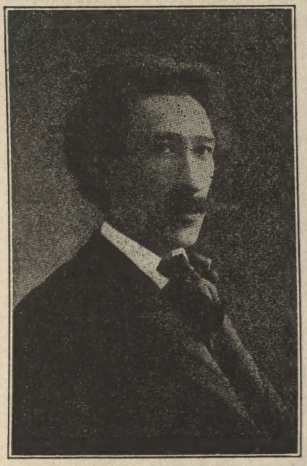
De Kolta was a creator of marvelous illusions. His mind ran to the spectacular, and he invented amazing feats of magic that were unparalleled. His "Vanishing Lady," "The Cocoon," and the "Flying Bird Cage" met with great success when introduced in Paris, and de Kolta subsequently performed in London and America.



Buatier de Kolta

As a performer, de Kolta lacked the gracefulness and poise of other famous magicians, but he made up for this failing with the effectiveness of his illusions. He suffered at the hands of imitators, and jealously guarded his secrets, with the result that some of his best effects died with him.

De Kolta's real name was Joseph Buatier; he was born in Lyons, France, in 1845. He adopted the name de Kolta from his cousin, who acted as his manager for fifteen years. His appearance was mystical, and he was one of the most unusual personages who has ever become publicly famous.



Joseffy

Joseffy

SINCE the days of de Kolta, the greatest creative genius who has appeared in magic is Joseffy, an Austrian inventor who now lives in Chicago.

This remarkable man has produced feats of mystery that rival fabled stories of the Orient, and the reputed sorcery of the middle ages; yet like all conjurers, he relies upon natural methods to accomplish his ends.

One of his greatest achievements has been the duplication of an illusion made famous by de Kolta, which is known as the "Expanding Cube." In this amazing production, Joseffy causes a tiny one-inch

die to increase in size until it measures three feet, six inches, and when it is lifted a lady appears beneath it. According to those who have witnessed this illusion, it surpasses the original mystery as exhibited by de Kolta.

Joseffy's masterpiece is his living skull. This uncanny object is placed upon a piece of glass, which is held at the corners by spectators. In response to the magician's questions, the skull turns its head and closes its jaws, answering his queries by the number of clicks made by its teeth.

This is a visual demonstration that surpasses the psychic wonders of so-called mediums. The skull operates anywhere, under the most exacting conditions, and it is considered by experts to be one of the greatest mysteries of all time.

THE STORY OF THE WERE-WOLVES

THE belief in the transformation of men into wolves or other beasts of prey has been very widely diffused; there is perhaps no people among whom some evidence of its former prevalence does not exist.

But it was no belief in mere transformation; the transformation was accomplished by Satanic agency voluntarily submitted to, and that for the most loathsome ends, in particular for the gratification of a craving for human flesh.

"The were-wolves," writes Richard Verstegan in his *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence,* published in 1628, "are certayne sorcerers, who having annoynted their bodies with an oyntment which they make by the instinct of the devill, and putting on a certayne inchaunted girdle, doe not onely unto the view of others seeme as wolves, but to their owne thinking have both the shape and nature of wolves, so long as they weare the said girdle. And they do dispose themselves as very wolves, wourrying and killing, and mostly of human creatures."

Olaus Magnus states that in Prussia, Lithuania, and Livonia, though wolves were very numerous and troublesome, the ravages of the were-wolves were regarded as much more serious. Every year at the feast of the Nativity at night the were-wolves assembled in great numbers at appointed places, and proceeded to look out for human beings, or tame animals, upon which they could glut their appetites. If they found an isolated house they entered it and devoured every human being and tame animal it contained; after which—proving that they were not common wolves—they drank up all the beer or mead.

In the 15th and 16th centuries the belief in were-wolves was as general throughout Europe as the belief in witches, which it had then come to resemble in several respects. It gave rise to prosecutions almost as frequent as those for witchcraft, and these generally ended in the confession of the accused, and his death by hanging or burning.

The were-wolves, like the witches, were regarded as the servants of the devil, from whom they got the power of assuming the wolf's form; and it was believed that great numbers of them trooped together to the devils sabbath.

The stories of mutilations and other mishaps befalling them in the wolf state, by which, when they resumed the human form, they were identified as were-wolves, exactly resemble the stories told of witches.

The Black Well of Wadi

By FRANK OWEN

AS I sat sipping iced coffee at the Café de la Bourse on the Place du Gouvernement in Algiers, I suddenly became conscious of Waldo Bernardi sitting directly opposite, despite the fact that I had chosen a table in a far corner among the palms where I might be alone. I was not surprised at his sudden appearance. I accepted it without comment. I did not speak as I sipped my coffee, nor did he. For perhaps half an hour I lingered there in silence. And when I arose to go, he did likewise. Together we went to my rooms at the Hotel d'Orient on the Boulevard de la Republique.

All evening he remained with me, although I paid scant attention to him. I gave my time to packing, as I had planned a long pilgrimage south, and the morrow would see me off. Perhaps to those not acquainted with Monsieur Bernardi our utter silence would have seemed odd, but in truth it was intentional, for we had confessed to each other that we found silence eloquent. This was the bond that drew us together—we, who could scarcely term ourselves more than acquaintances; for, excepting the abrupt meeting at the Café, I had chanced upon him but three times in my life, and all three had occurred on the fringe of the desert.

I had intended having several guides and porters along, but at the final moment I changed my mind. I went accompanied solely by Waldo Bernardi.

Not until we were well out in the desert did I observe anything extraordinary about my companion, possibly because until now I had never troubled to study him closely. My first shock of surprise came when I realized that at meals he ate nothing. He sat and toyed with his food but never carried even a morsel to his lips. For three days I watched him in silence, then I commented on his loss of appetite.

He smiled contemptuously. "I do not eat," he said shortly, "because I consider that, for me, it is a waste of time."

But soon the results of his abstinence were re-

vealed. His face grew painfully haggard and thin, so thin that his skin was as parchment stretched over a skeleton. I shivered as the simile came to me, so perfectly did it fit Waldo Bernardi. I felt as though we were walking on the brink of disaster, for it was vividly apparent that Bernardi was dying. Yet he did not complain. On we traveled—endlessly.

His long fingers, like great white claws, clutched at the wall as he fell

Day after day I sat in silence watching him die. There was nothing I could do to help him. I had suggested returning to Algiers but he would not hear of it. Daily I witnessed the gradual stages of dissolution, and yet the most awful thing about it was that I felt I was observing not so much of bodily illness as the passing of a soul. It is difficult to convey the impression this incident made upon me. All through the nights I would lie awake gazing at his gaunt face, which glistened in the star-glow. I felt as if I were the last man in the last world; as though the earth were deserted save for myself alone; as though the very essence of joy had been parched to ashes by the blinding desert sun and winds. And in those moments I doubted the existence of a supreme being, lost faith in everything except the terrible unescapable doom which is in store for us all.

ONE night as we sat out there in the desert under the star-dotted sky, he told me a fragment of his history.

"Quite some time ago," he said slowly, " I loved a girl as beautiful and fragile as an orchid. We were to marry; but she died, and all happiness and hope went from me. I sought the comfort of barren places; and with only a camel and a few necessities roamed here among the sand dunes. And in the course of my wanderings I met an old man called Haji. A bit of a wizard, he. To Haji I made known my grief. He replied that were my education complete, I could not mourn the loss of that which is not lost. And when I asked him what he meant, he confided his belief that the desert is the beginning and the end of life. As we are created from dust and unto dust must return—and fur-

ther, that life in the aggregate——"

Waldo Bernardi paused abruptly. "Perhaps it is unwise to continue," he reflected, "for the human mind is like a much-used road in which lines of travel are too deeply etched to permit the slightest deviation."

"Which does not," I hastened to assure him, "apply to me, for I have lived in the Orient, and the spirit of the Orient is in my blood."

To this he made no reply, but after a moment of silence resumed: "Through Haji my sight grew so keen that shortly I was able to perceive the forms of souls which hover constantly about us. And one day he gazed into my eyes and said, 'Go deeper into the desert and you will find her whom you seek.' And as Haji had spoken, so it came to pass. At the Black Well of Wadi I found Coralie. It was evening when I found her and she was seated on the sand, facing the East, as though fully expecting me. I wish I were the poet Saadi, that I might tell you of the glory of that night. I prayed to arrest the flight of time—to make each moment a thousand years. But at last Coralie said to me, 'You must go, though it is only for a little while.' So I returned to Haji and my heart was lighter than in years.

"The following night Haji again sent me into the vague land that is marked by the Black Well of Wadi. Coralie awaited me as she had the preceding evening. Thus a month passed, and every night, through the influence of Haji, I met her again. My happiness was boundless. And then a great fear attacked me. Suppose Haji should die! Coralie would then be lost to me forever. Haji was eighty years old and very feeble. At best he could live only a few years longer. The fear grew and made of me a pitiful thing. I spent my time planning a way out. The thought of losing exquisite Coralie at the moment of Haji's passing horrified me. For it was only through him that I could meet this soul of Coralie, which was even more gorgeous than the body.

Coralie awaited me as she had the preceding evening. My happiness was boundless

"At length I reasoned my way to a solution—ghastly, perhaps, in itself, but to me the only one feasible. And that night, after Haji had woven his delightful spell I persuaded him to accompany me to the rendezvous.

"Upon our arrival at the Black Well of Wadi, Haji leaned over the stone wall which surrounds it and gazed into

the darkness below. In that moment all reason left me. I seized the old man about his waist and pitched him into the Well. He uttered a cry that shattered the web of solitude and echoed weirdly over the desert. His bony fingers, like great white claws, clutched at the wall as he fell, and he somehow managed to grip a projecting rock. But I bent over and clasped my hands about his throat. I released my hold to hear his body strike from rock to rock until it cut the water with a purling splash. But I felt no pity. I had concluded that the only way to keep Coralie with me was to kill Haji while still under his strange influence.

"For a few seconds I stood gazing into the black mouth of the Well; then I turned to take Coralie in my arms, but she was gone. I called many times. No one answered. It was not until I had lain in the sand for hours, raging in grief, that the full horror of what I had done burst upon me. By killing Haji, I had defeated my purpose. With his death, the spell was broken."

WALDO BERNARDI paused in his narrative. His face was white and perspiration stood upon his forehead. He appeared to be suffering profound mental torture.

"Ever since that day," he concluded, "I have searched for Coralie. She is somewhere in this desert, yet I cannot find her."

As he spoke, he closed his eyes. I sat silent, motionless. In the face of his strange confession what could I say? For hours we sat thus, neither stirring. A chill wind sprang from nowhere and whistled eerily across the desert. I shuddered and a great longing for companionship crept over me. I rose to my feet and shook my companion, without response. I shook him again, and then I felt his cheek. It was cold. Not a glimmer of life remained in him. Like a candle, he had just burned out. I stretched him on a rug and began a long, lonely night of watching by his side. In the distance I could hear the howling of wolves and I knew that if I were but to close my eyes they would pounce upon his body. And yet, though I shamefully admit it, just before dawn I must have fallen into a troubled sleep, for the next thing I knew I was sitting up rubbing my eyes to bring memory into focus again. Then with a cry I sprang to my feet. I looked toward the rug upon which Bernardi had lain. The body was gone, nor was there the slightest sign of a wolf anywhere in sight. Gone also was Bernardi's camel. An uncanny chill passed over me.

That morning I decided to abandon my journey. I did not wish to proceed alone. So I returned to the Hotel d' Orient at Algiers, which I reached without further adventure.

The first person I met at the Hotel was Mathews, the manager, and because I yearned for companionship, for some one to talk to, I sat down with him at a secluded table and told him what had befallen in the desert.

When I had finished, he smiled unbelievingly. "Old man," he said, "I think you have got a touch of sun. I suggest that you take a good dose of quinine and stay in bed for a week. Waldo Bernardi died more than three years ago. A caravan en route to the Soudan found his body one morning out in the desert. Before the Arabs continued on their way they buried him beneath a great palm tree in an oasis near the Black Well of Wadi."

And thus ended the incident of the man Bernardi.

Thurston, the great Magician, who, in the accompanying article, tells of an amazing adventure in India

The Miracle Man of Benares

By HOWARD THURSTON

TWENTY years ago I was in India. I had arrived in Calcutta, and was performing at a theater in that city. Despite the fact that I was very busy, I spent much of my time studying the methods of Hindu magicians, for strange tales of Oriental wonders had lured me to that mystic land.

While in Calcutta, a mysterious person appeared in the city of Gaya, and created a great sensation among the

people. He was a tall, old Hindu, very thin and ragged; in fact, his tattered garments consisted of little more than a loin cloth.

No one knew whence he came. He said nothing, but continued on his way. Wherever he went he was followed by thousands, all striving to get near him. The crowds were so large that police were called to disperse them, and their excitement had reached amazing proportions.

This strange creature, who appeared to be nothing more than a poor beggar, was performing a most unexpected miracle—that of distributing money to the crowds that thronged about him. He carried a large black bottle in one hand, and with the other he threw forth coins of every description—copper and silver pice, annas, eight annas, and even rupee pieces; and at each handful, the mob would surge about him and struggle desperately to obtain the money.

Three wise men of the Orient—Hindu magicians appearing with Thurston in his world-famous show

The strangest thing about the man was the mysterious way in which he obtained the coins. His arms and legs were bare, and his hands never touched his scanty garments. He seemed to produce the money from the air. For three consecutive days he made his appearance and repeated his generous gifts. The reports reached Bombay and Calcutta, and the press of India contained long descriptions of the beggar who had unlimited treasure to cast to the poor.

The excitement died down as suddenly as it had begun; then, three weeks later, a long account appeared in the Calcutta dailies, describing many miracles that were being performed by the same man. He had stationed himself under a great tree, just outside of the city of Benares, and he claimed to heal sickness and predict the future, thus attracting great attention from the natives of every class. It was said that even the Maharajah of Benares had become interested in the feats of the mysterious Hindu.

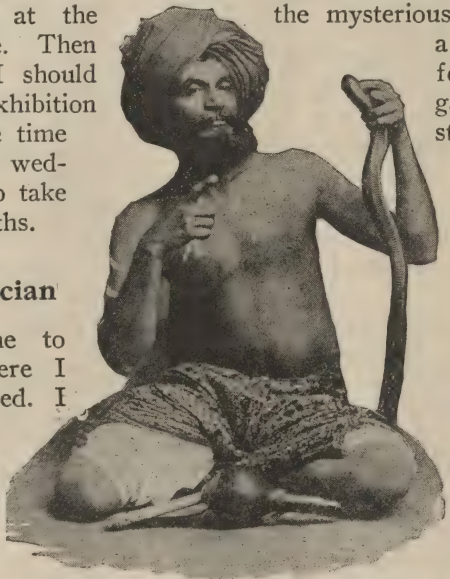
About that time I left the Theatre Royal and moved to a theater in Beadon Street, situated in the heart of the native section of Calcutta. A great convention was being held, and Calcutta was soon crowded with people from every part of India. My performances were witnessed by large audiences, and became so popular that I was called upon to give a private show for His Highness, the Maharajah of Benares.

Flinging his hands in the air, the miracle man produced a shower of golden coins! The Maharajah turned to me, with a look of triumph, and asked if I could perform such wonders

After the performance, the Maharajah sent for me, and told me of the wonderful Hindu magician who had come to Benares, and who was then living at the Maharajah's palace. Then he arranged that I should give a private exhibition at his court at the time of his daughter's wedding, which was to take place in three months.

The Court Magician

THUS I came to Benares, where I was cordially received. I gave my scheduled performance in the palace, and then the Maharajah asked me to witness the great mysteries performed by his court magician.



Bella Hassan, a mysterious Hindu fakir who returned with Thurston from India

At the appointed time, a party of us were admitted to the room in which the mysterious yogi sat. Upon our arrival the magician folded his hands and began to pray in Hindustanee. Then suddenly, raising hands in the air, he made frantic gestures, about his head; and with a terrible scream he hurled a handful of glittering gold coins upon the stone floor!

This was a remarkable piece of acting, and a miracle to be long remembered as the magician wore only a small silk loin cloth, which, with the exception of the long

hair that hung down over his shoulders, was all that covered his body.

The Maharajah turned to me, with a look of triumph, and asked if I could perform such wonders. At first I hesitated in surprise, but remembering that I was present as a professional magician, I replied that I could duplicate the trick, although I confess that I felt as Pharaoh's conjurers must have felt when they witnessed the transformation of Aaron's rod.

My answer seemed to displease the yogi, for he immediately repeated his miraculous performance, this time producing enough golden sovereigns to fill both of his hands!

The private secretary of the Maharajah spoke highly in praise of the yogi, and informed us that the magician had promised to show his wonderful feat of making gold, and would give the performance on the following day.

The next morning began the third day of the festivities, which were to last for one week, and many kinds of entertainment had been provided. We witnessed the famous dancing girls of India, acrobats of every description, a bull fight, a battle between two elephants, and finally a duel between a snake and a mongoose. At last came the yogi, who was to demonstrate to the Maharajah the great secret of making gold.

With breathless silence the assembly watched the procedure. A great fire was kindled and several large pieces of wood were brought forward by the yogi's followers. When the fire was burning at its greatest heat, the magician compounded a mixture of several powders and liquids in small brass bowls. He worked this into a clay-like substance, and dropped it carefully in the center of the fire. A glare of flame and much crackling followed. Then the fire was scraped aside, and to the amazement of all, there remained a large ball of soft yellow metal which proved to be pure gold!

The excitement was so intense that the yogi, at the request of the Maharajah's private secretary, offered to repeat the operation. The fire was rekindled, and the magician's followers brought more logs of wood. While this was taking place, I studied the problem that confronted me. Despite the acclaim which had been bestowed upon the yogi, I was not convinced that his miracles were genuine. So I quietly stationed myself as near to him as possible.

As one of the helpers approached and laid a log of wood beside the fire, I stepped forward and raised it in my hands. Then I turned toward the Maharajah; but before I could speak an iron was pressed against my foot and my arm was seized in a vise-like grip. I found myself faced by the Maharajah's secretary, who had drawn me back with such violence that I nearly fell into the fire.

"Stop!" he whispered fiercely in my ear. "Don't be a fool!"

I dropped the log beside the fire, and walked away. My suspicions had been confirmed; I had solved the mystery of the gold in the fire, and I had found a clue to the other miracles performed by the yogi. I decided to interview the Maharajah the next day.

The Yogi Unmasked

THAT night, as I lay asleep in my bungalow, which was situated in a part of the palace grounds, I was awakened by sharp raps at the door; and when I opened it, there, to my surprise, stood the yogi and two of his disciples.

"Sahib," said the Hindu, in a calm

voice, "I have come to tell you that you must leave this place. It is not large enough for two of us. These are my servants and they will do as I tell them. Tomorrow night they will come to see if you have gone."

The three men silently left the bungalow and vanished in the shrubbery. Undisturbed by the yogi's threat, I sat in my room, piecing together the events of the past few days.

I recalled that one of the court attendants had said that every day the Maharajah, through his secretary, gave the yogi ten gold sovereigns to throw into the sacred Ganges as an offering to the gods. I was certain that the river did not receive that offering. It was evident to my mind that the yogi and the secretary were in collusion.

Opening the door of the bungalow, I observed a light in a window of the palace, and saw that it came from the yogi's apartment. Approaching it cautiously, I caught a glimpse of the magician and the Maharajah's secretary in heated conversation.

The next morning I went to see the Maharajah. Step by step I explained my theories, which were based upon my observations and my knowledge of magic. I told him that I was leaving on the same day, thus fulfilling the demand of the yogi, who would therefore suspect no further interference; and I gave the Maharajah important instructions to be followed.

I left Benares the same day, and soon after I sailed from India. As I was boarding a P. & O. steamer at Bombay, for Cairo, I was handed the following letter:

Benares.

My Dear Mr. Thurston:

His Highness, the Maharajah of Benares, wishes to inform you that your statements proved to be correct, and that he obtained evidence that Mr. Ganguly, former secretary to His Highness, was in league with the yogi.

The money which the yogi distributed to the people in Gaya had been given to him by Mr. Ganguly, in order that he might attract the interest of the populace. Your statement to His Highness was correct, in that the yogi concealed the money in the black bottle which he carried and cleverly appeared to catch it from the air.

Your explanation of the gold coins which the yogi apparently produced in his apartment was also correct. The man had the coins concealed in his long hair, and obtained them when he waved his hands in the air.

In accordance with your instructions, His Highness secretly marked the ten sovereigns which he gave daily to be cast in the Ganges. Some of them were found among the coins which the yogi produced from the air; others were found in the possession of Mr. Ganguly.

As you suspected, one of the logs used on the fire had been hollowed out, and gold imbedded within it, enabling the fakir to produce the molten metal.

His Highness expresses his greatest gratitude for your investigations, and wishes to have the pleasure of again witnessing your marvelous performance when you return to India.

I have the honor to remain,

Yours sincerely,

A. Sarat Roy,

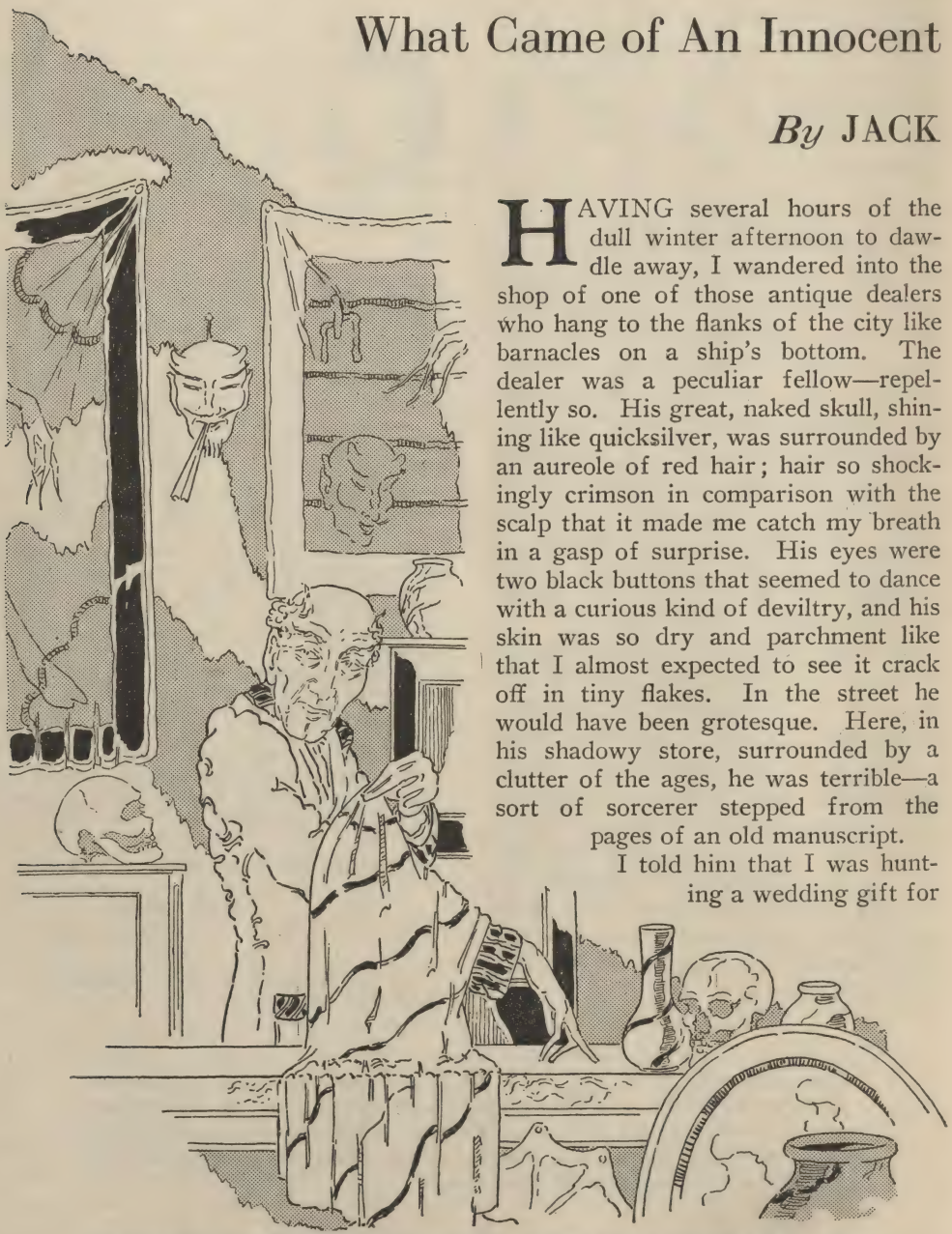
Private secretary to His Highness, the Maharajah of Benares.

In the next issue of "Tales of Magic and Mystery", Thurston narrates an amazing adventure which he experienced in the mystic city of Rangoon, the capital of Burma. His story takes you to the inner shrine of a Buddhist temple, where, again, his mastery of the art of magic serves him in good stead.

The Adventure of

What Came of An Innocent

By JACK



His eyes were two black buttons that seemed to dance with a curious kind of deviltry

HAVING several hours of the dull winter afternoon to dawdle away, I wandered into the shop of one of those antique dealers who hang to the flanks of the city like barnacles on a ship's bottom. The dealer was a peculiar fellow—repellently so. His great, naked skull, shining like quicksilver, was surrounded by an aureole of red hair; hair so shockingly crimson in comparison with the scalp that it made me catch my breath in a gasp of surprise. His eyes were two black buttons that seemed to dance with a curious kind of deviltry, and his skin was so dry and parchment like that I almost expected to see it crack off in tiny flakes. In the street he would have been grotesque. Here, in his shadowy store, surrounded by a clutter of the ages, he was terrible—a sort of sorcerer stepped from the pages of an old manuscript.

I told him that I was hunting a wedding gift for

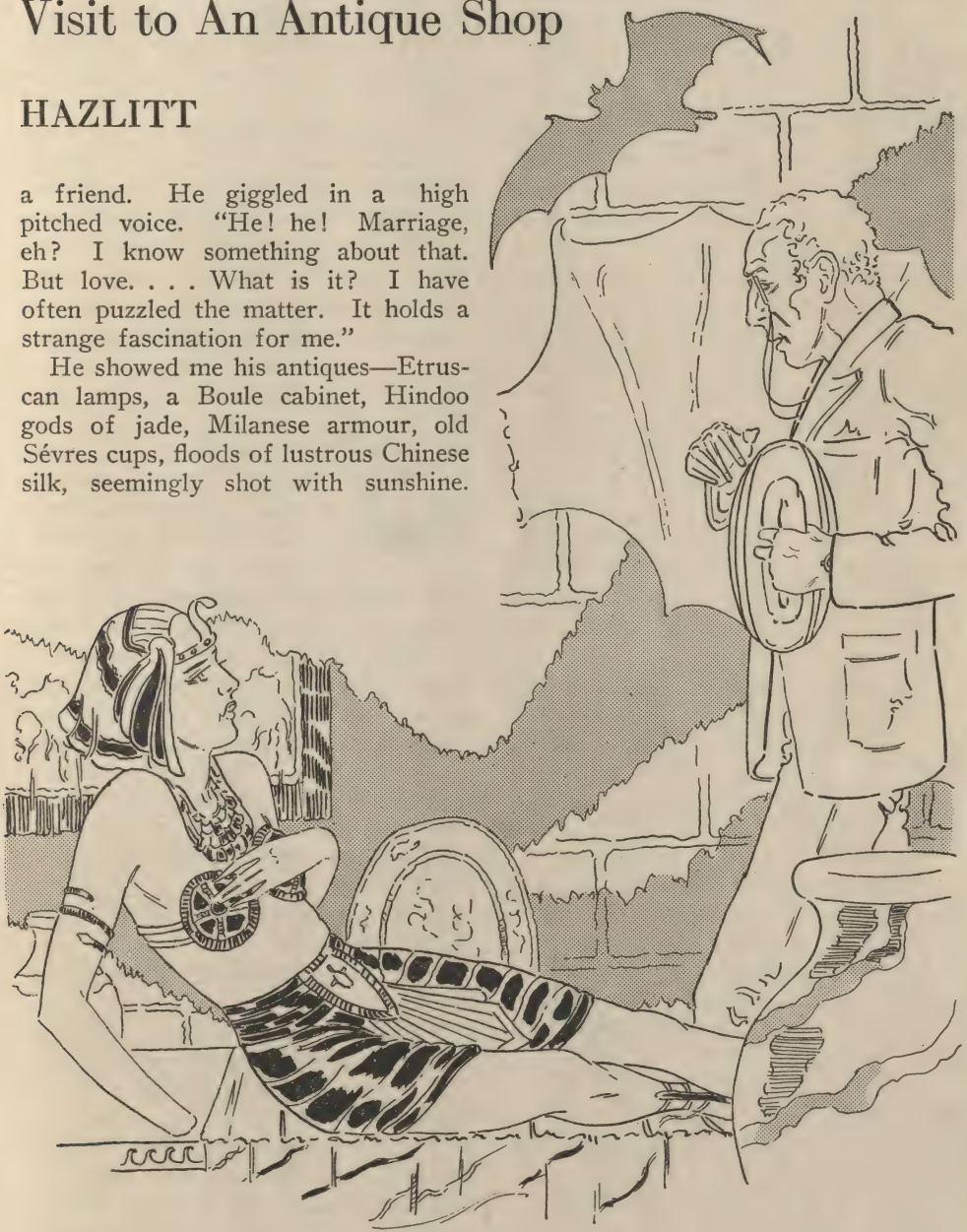
the Mummy's Hand

Visit to An Antique Shop

HAZLITT

a friend. He giggled in a high pitched voice. "He! he! Marriage, eh? I know something about that. But love. . . . What is it? I have often puzzled the matter. It holds a strange fascination for me."

He showed me his antiques—Etruscan lamps, a Boule cabinet, Hindoo gods of jade, Milanese armour, old Sévres cups, floods of lustrous Chinese silk, seemingly shot with sunshine.



Princess Amanti sat up very suddenly, her gaze fixed on me

None of them interested me so much as the face of the shop-keeper himself; an old, intellectual face that might have frowned above a Roman toga, or smiled at the dancing girls of Thebes.

Apparently the dealer sensed my lack of appreciation. With a fine courtesy he invited me into his apartment back of the store. Now, I am not a coward, and, physically, was three or four times as powerful as the shrivelled antiquarian, yet a cold little dash went up my spine as he locked the store door and led me into the dining-room. It was a cozy place, with an open fire and a turkey-red cloth on the table.

An old woman was pottering about, arranging and re-arranging the table in a hopelessly dull way. Her skin was muddy. The veins stood out in her neck, and her thinning, dusty hair was almost white. I noticed, with a peculiar shock, that her right arm ended in a stump directly above the wrist.

My host favored her with a snarl. "Get out of here."

For a moment resentment flickered in her eyes. Then it faded to a cinder. Her shoulders slumped, and she padded upstairs.

"My wife," said the antiquarian.

He brought out a bottle of wine and poured it with the care of a jeweller counting his gems. The wine was golden-green, sparkling, exquisite. It bathed me as in sunshine.

"It is the elixir of Xixouthros, who ruled Egypt before the deluge," he said, rubbing his flat palms.

I stared at him. I didn't believe I had heard him aright, and perhaps I hadn't, but somehow I did not care. I was vaguely satisfied to lose myself in the atmosphere of mysticism I felt closing in about me.

"You wonder why I gave it to you?"

"Yes. Why?"

His shoe button eyes almost closed in the squint that spread across his countenance. "It was your talk of love. . . ."

He opened a drawer in the table. Instantly I was conscious of Oriental perfumes—bitumen, natron and myrrh, in which the Egyptian dead were bathed. It assailed my nostrils with the effect of a whiff of chloroform. My head grew light, and I seized the edge of the table to keep from falling to the floor. . . .

The antiquarian took something from the drawer and laid it on the table. It was a woman's hand, slim and perfectly formed. The fingers tapered in toward the palm; the nails were rosy and highly polished. Laying there in the center of the turkey-red cloth it seemed athrob with life. Yet I knew, in spite of my curiously light head, that this must be a mummy's hand—wonderfully embalmed. How eerie it was to think that three thousand years ago it had been part of a living body!

The dealer filled my glass again with the elixir of Xixouthros. I drank eagerly, endeavoring to forget my host's button-like eyes.

"Whose hand was it?" I asked carelessly.

"That of the Princess Amanti, daughter of the Pharoah called Xixouthros," replied the antiquarian. "I was her lover!"

Had I not drunk the elixir, I might have thought the man mad. He was old, true enough, but the dust of thirty centuries had gathered on her Theban tomb since Princess Amanti was car-

ried there to await the Judgment of Souls.

Preposterous!—Yet I believed.

"I was her lover," repeated the antiquarian in an expressionless voice, "but I was a priest of Thoth, and poorly born. They scoffed at me for my passion. I swore I would have her hand ——"

His shrill falsetto rose to an hysterical giggle—"but she died before I could make good my boast. They laid her body away in a tomb on which thousands of slaves had labored for years. I swore by Oms, the dog of hell, that I would have my way, and so one night, my brain seething, I crept to the chamber that sheltered her—and cut off her hand at the wrist! It was the only way I could have it." He giggled again, his bald head twitching.

I stared at him, incapable of movement.

"Then, in a frenzy, I took my life, for it was ashes in my mouth without Amanti. Yet how banal of me to think that I might destroy life—that which is eternal. I have lived again and yet again to realize in subconscious revelations such as these, the folly of my suicide."

"You—have now—a wife," I said thickly.

"Yes. One as ugly as the Cat of Bubastes. Amanti was glorious as the flicker of the moon on the Nile, and yet—yet—I am tormented by Amanti in the sight of my wife's withered stump—in some vague glow in her eyes. I've beaten the woman until my shoulders ached. What right has she to remind me of the women I loved three thousand long years ago? But these cravings for my ancient princess are, I believe, about to be satisfied. You, who have drunk of the elixir of Xixouthros, shall go in spirit to her tomb in Thebes, and bring her here to me. . . ."

The man was mad—unquestionably mad—yet. . . .

I STOOD in the desert beyond the Nile, and heard the wind in the tents of the caravanmen, the stir of the camels and the forlorn howl of shivering jackal. Before me lay the ruins of a broken civilization—shattered obelisks and pylons; immense tombs of long-forgotten kings. At my feet an uprooted pillar showed steps descending into the shadows. Down there I could see a wall and a lotus-carved rim of a stone-framed pool; beyond it a door. The place was thick with the atmosphere of death and decay. Even the water in the pool lacked the flash and sparkle of life.

I went down the steps, opened the door, and passed into a vast room, where on every wall and column hung insignia of ancient royalty. Stretched across the threshold—like a sleeping guard—was the figure of a man, wearing a *pshent* of gold and a breastplate that glittered with gems. All about me were mummy-cases, hundreds and hundreds of them. I passed them by, for I saw the gold edges of a woman's sandals sparkle in the gloom. Her arms were crossed on her breast, and —God—*one hand had been severed at the wrist.*

She seemed merely to have stretched herself out there to sleep, this beautiful Egyptian princess. Her skin was olive—not blackened by naptha and bitumen as are most mummies'—her brows so dark as to be almost blue. Her features were Grecian in their delicacy of outline, save for the slightly sensual fulness of the lips.

Though the idea seemed utterly ridiculous, I could not help thinking

that I had seen her, or someone who looked like her, at one time or another. Then it came to me of a sudden. The old antiquarian's wife!

The wine was golden-green, sparkling, exquisite. "It is the elixir of Xixouthras, who ruled Egypt before the deluge," he said

Physically, no two people in this world could look less alike than this impassive princess and the shuffling old crone of the curio-shop, and yet there was a strange resemblance that went beyond the flesh.

I gazed on her gold striped skirt, on the scarab-jewelled knife in the girdle supporting it, and thought of the untidy Mother Hubbard the wife of the curio dealer wore. There was not a single item of feature, form or clothing in which they were alike—yet the one made me think of the other.

Standing there beside her I seemed to see the grotesquely bald head of the curio dealer come between us. A sudden fury welled up in me. What right had he to this exquisite toy of the gods? What was his love but a madness that could acquiesce in her mutilation?

I bent above her, touching the soft, cold skin of her arm. The perfume of grave clothes was in my nostrils. It seemed cruel to wake her; she who lay there so peacefully, but my mind was not my own. It belonged to the bald headed little curio dealer.

I spoke to her: "Amanti! Awake!"

The princess stirred, a flush creeping into her colorless cheeks. With a vague motion she brushed back the hair from her forehead, and opened her eyes of Egyptian blue. And, as life came back to her, so it came to all those other dead in the chamber. The guard on the floor got to his feet, yawning; a pharoah, white bearded and majestic, rose from his stone couch.

And there stood I, in the midst of the majestically garbed returning dead, wearing a pinch-back overcoat and a velour hat!

Princess Amanti sat up very suddenly, her gaze fixed on me; the stump of her slender arm resting on her knee. "What dost thou desire?" she asked.

I told her of the story the curio-dealer had related. I told her that if she desired her hand again she must

An old woman was pottering about

come with me. And then, for the first time, Amanti looked, and saw the raw stump, unhealed after three thousand years!

Her low voice rose to a wail, to a shriek of utter horror; the horror of the tortured dead. My spine became a streak of ice; but, biting my lips to stem back my own grievous fright, I bent and seized her in my arms. . . .

We were instantly back in the antiquarian's little dining-room—all of us who, a moment before, had stood in the great burial hall of the pharoahs. The dining-room had not grown, but it seemed to shelter the multitude with ease. My curio-dealer sat in his chair, stroking his high, bald head, and looking at the hand on the table.

Then, very slowly, his eyes shifted to the woman standing beside me. I expected to see his button-like eyes flame with the joy of possession. Instead, they glowed with a dull hatred.

"What the devil are you doing here?" he cried.

I turned to see how the princess would reply, and my jaw dropped in utter amazement, for there in place of the wonderful girl I had awakened in her Theban tomb, stood the wrinkled old wife of the curio dealer!

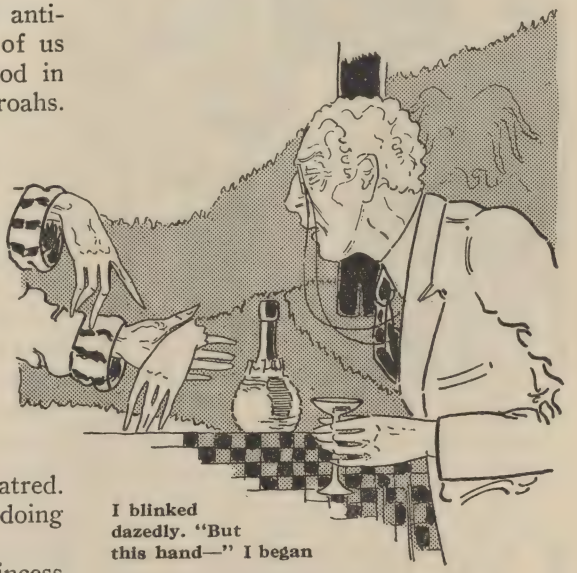
"I thought I might wait on you," she mumbled, departing.

Like a transformation scene in the Hippodrome the ancient throngs had faded away. I found myself seated at the table, as before, my fingers still touching the goblet which had contained the elixir of Xixouthros.

Opposite me, his bald head glistening, sat my host. He was tapping his glass with a lean forefinger and smacking his lips. "Ah! An excellent drink, sir. An *excellent* drink. It fills one with fancies," he commented.

I blinked dazedly, and then, finding myself, nodded. "But this hand——" I began. Obviously, I had imagined all those other weird things in the space of a mere minute or two. The hand, however, lay there as large as life.

"He—he! You thought it real, eh? No-o. *Papier mache.* She—my wife



I blinked dazedly. "But this hand—" I began

—wears it when she waits on store ——"

I expressed sympathy with her infirmity.

The beady-eyed fellow displayed impatience. "She thinks nothing of it," he declared. "She was born that way. . . . But come. I told you, when you said you were in search of a wedding gift, that *I* knew something of love. I do. I know this: that love is inexplainable, and that it is useless to inquire into its mysteries. Take my own case. Though I shrink from the very sight of my wife—from her ugly face and shrivelled body—there is yet something that draws me irresistibly to

(*Continued on page* 64)

Other magicians learned of Astley's bullet trick
They studied his methods and copied him

Bullet

The History of a Enthralling Mystery Countless Audiences Ill Omen Indeed for

By BERNARD

ONE hundred and fifty years ago, a regiment of British soldiers was stationed in Europe. With them was an officer named Philip Astley, a celebrated equestrian and an amateur conjurer. He was a man of ingenuity and was popular with his brother officers.

One day a quarrel occurred between two hot-blooded young lieutenants in Astley's regiment. An insult was given and satisfaction was demanded. The field of honor was decided upon as the place to settle the argument, and the duel was to be with pistols. The day was set and the combatants made ready for their fight.

It was impossible to postpone the duel; for the customs of that period would not permit it. Yet the colonel of the regiment did not relish the thought of dissension in his own ranks. He wanted both men to be satisfied; yet he wanted neither to be wounded or killed. The dilemma that confronted him was perplexing—until Philip Astley, with his peculiar ingenuity, evolved a plan that seemed feasible.

The clever conjurer enlisted the aid of the two seconds of the duellists. He obtained possession of the pistols that were to be used, and invented a simple mechanical arrangement whereby the bullets could be secretly removed after the guns had been carefully loaded. He instructed the seconds in their duties, and thus assured a bloodless duel.

When the two officers met in combat, the pistols were loaded in their presence, and each man took his post. The seconds gave them their guns, and each young lieutenant nervously aimed at his living target. The signal was given; the shots were fired; and when the smoke cleared away, both men stood uninjured. Their honor was unsullied, for the duel had been fought; and they were restored to comradeship, blissfully ignorant of the deception

Catching

Once Sensational and Which Entertained But Which Proved An Many Performers

PERRY

which had been practiced upon them.

Had Philip Astley forgotten his clever invention then and there, he would have been remembered as a man who had saved two lives. But the ingenious system that had been devised to save life was destined to cause death and sorrow over a period of a century and a half. It would have far better had both the duellists been slain if thier deaths had prevented the tragedies that were to follow!

The success of his invention appealed to Astley's conjuring mind. On his return to England, he prepared a pistol that resembled those used in the duel, and employed it to amuse and entertain his friends. He did not fear to face the pistol which he himself had loaded, and he won merited fame as a man who was bullet-proof.

Other magicians learned of Astley's bullet trick. They studied his methods and copied him, improving the trick to the point where a marked bullet was used and produced by the magician after the gun had been fired. The famous bullet catching mystery became famous and proved to be one of the most sensational marvels ever presented on the stage.

As a result of the popularity of this trick, more than twenty people met death by reason of some small detail going awry

The Tragedies Begin

EDMOND DE GRISY, a brilliant French magician, employed the trick in a William Tell tableau. He appeared as the Swiss hero, and fired a pistol at his son who stood with an apple balanced on his head. When the apple was cut open, a marked bullet that had been placed in the gun was found imbedded in the apple!

During the course of his travels, de Grisy arrived in Strassbourg. A large audience assembled to witness his performance. All went well until the bullet trick. De Grisy's young son took his position as the living target. The gun was loaded; the magician took steady aim, and fired point blank at the boy's head.

The youthful assistant staggered and

fell. The apple tumbled from his head and rolled to a corner of the stage, where it was forgotten. De Grisy dropped the pistol and rushed to his son's aid, imploring the boy to speak. But the tragedy was ended. Young de Grisy never arose from the spot where he fell. Something had gone wrong—and the result was fatal.

The magician was tried for homicide. He was sentenced to six months in jail. While he was still in prison, his wife died of a broken heart. Upon his release, de Grisy assumed the name of Torrini, and traveled as an itinerant magician, from town to town. His days of glory were ended, and he died a few years later, a broken man, still brooding over his misfortune.

In 1814, a troupe of clever Hindoo magicians came to England, and scored a great success with the bullet trick. Their fame preceded them to Ireland, and they arrived in Dublin to give their sensational exhibition.

One of the performers offered a gun to a burly Irishman, and invited him to fire it. As the Hindoo was taking his position across the stage, the Irishman happened to reach in his pocket, where he felt a clay pipe. He broke off the stem of the pipe, and dropped it into the muzzle of the gun.

The shot was fired, and the clay projectile struck the magician in the neck. His wound was serious, and he never recovered. His death occurred a few days later.

An English magician named Buck was the victim of a similar occurrence. Some member of the committee on the stage dropped a few slugs into the pistol used in the trick, and the conjurer was frightfully wounded by the discharge.

The wife of a magician named de Linsky was killed attempting the bullet trick. Many inferior performers who undertook this dangerous exhibition suffered injury or death. In some cases, a few facts have been recorded; but in many instances even the names of the unfortunate victims have been forgotten; yet it has been definitely established that at least twenty persons met a tragic fate through the ill-omened bullet catching mystery, which brought destruction to those who claimed to defy death.

Famous Performers of the Bullet Trick

DESPITE these tragedies, many celebrated magicians performed the trick. Robert-Houdin, the famous French prestidigitateur, featured it in his program. When he toured Algeria, on behalf of the French government, he bewildered the natives with his bullet catching mystery. Their magicians, called the Marabouts, claimed to be invulnerable, but refused to put themselves to the test. Robert-Houdin defeated them at their own game, and excited the awe and admiration of their followers, who pronounced him to be the master magician of all time.

Professor Anderson, a Scotch magician, also gained fame with his bullet catching trick. On one occasion, he nearly joined the ranks of the ever-increasing victims.

He invited a man on the stage to fire the pistol. Understanding the principle of the trick, the volunteer assistant saw to it that the gun was fairly loaded, and made it impossible for Anderson to proceed in safety. He expected the wizard to admit failure, and embarrass himself before the audience. But he reckoned wrongly. Anderson was possessed of a cast-iron nerve, and was no man to quail in the face of danger.

Calmly, and steadily, the magician walked across the stage and took his customary position. Then he invited the volunteer to fire. The man raised the gun, took aim, but could go no

One day a quarrel occurred between two hot-blooded young lieutenants in Astley's regiment. An insult was given and satisfaction was demanded. And so, curiously enough, the bullet catching illusion was born

further. He knew that the shot would kill the magician, and he lowered the weapon. Anderson ordered him to fire, and expressed impatience at the delay. The man was forced to admit defeat. The magician had won the dramatic duel, and had saved his reputation. The audience attributed the volunteer's refusal to weakness and lack of nerve. He left the stage amid laughter, and Anderson called for another man to take his place. This time the magician performed the trick in his usual manner.

Nevertheless, the cautious Scotch magician profited by this experience. He devised a bullet that was composed of an amalgam of tin-foil and mercury, which resembled the lead bullet in appearance and in weight. He arranged the trick so that the dummy bullet was loaded into the gun and remained there. The force of the discharge blew the trick bullet to atoms, and it had no more effect on the magician than a mere wad of paper.

The second and concluding installment of this absorbing history of the bullet catching illusion will appear in the next issue of TALES OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY.

Her cry will ring in my ears forever. The fright of a child at some monstrosity, the fear of a woman who knows not what she fears . . .

The Devil's Darling

The Fantastic Tale of a Man Possessed of a Devil who Directs Him to Dark Deeds of Horror and Ultimately Compels a Fearful Penance

By ERIC JULES

DELLART was a third year medical student and if a bad man can love, he loved his work. The minor operations he had been allowed to perform revealed such accuracy and delicacy of touch that the professors prophesied fame for him in the department of surgery. For some reason, which I do not understand, he was very anxious to perform an amputation of the leg above the knee and this, of course, he was not permitted to do. The limb which had excited his professional interest was that of a patient in the hospital, and Dellart saw it cut off. I happened to meet him going home afterward, and his face grew savage as he described the operation, and mentioned his desire. "But a sound limb would do as well," he said when he had finished.

The following evening he rushed into the room where he, Brown and I held our revels. He was in his most cheerful humor. I never saw him more happy nor full of deviltry. He was always a handsome fellow, but this night he was superb. Though the room was full of men drinking and playing cards, I saw no one but him, nothing but his strong, lithe figure, his supple hands, his magnificent head and beautiful dark eyes that glowed and shone more brilliantly the more reckless he grew. I had a curious sense of losing my identity in his and after an hour had passed, I began to imagine that every time I lifted my glass to my lips it was Dellart's wish, not mine.

"David was a man after God's own heart," I heard him say, "and I'm a man after the Devil's own heart—a sort of 'Devil's Darling.' "

The rest laughed boisterously; they spoke the name in drunken repetition until into my clouded brain came the thought that Dellart was, in some special sense, a child of the Devil. It increased, if possible, the power he exerted over me. And when, at last, I found myself outside, he was still my evil star, drawing me after him along the streets.

When I became fully conscious (though I shall always think I had left my stumbling body somewhere behind me), we had gone into a house and mounted to an apartment on the third floor. The room we entered was outfitted with table, instruments and all the appliances of surgery. Dellart glanced about as if to make sure that nothing was wanting and then stepped quietly into the adjoining room. I followed, for I was still under that strange influence the "Devil's Darling" had acquired over me.

This was evidently a lady's room for by an open fire sat a girl of not more

than seventeen; a girl with marvellous blue eyes—deep blue, with alluring lights in them. Her features were lovely, the more so because of their innocent, unsullied, even child-like aspect. Dellart cast himself on the rug at her feet and lay looking at her, his eyes glowing. And she looked down at him, overflowing, I could see, with love and admiration for her handsome lover. To her he was neither the Devil nor the "Devil's Darling." If I had been a creature born of Dellart's imagination, she could not have been more unconscious of my presence.

The thought came into my clouded brain that Dellart was, in some special sense, a child of the devil

Presently the man began talking in his low, magnetic voice, telling her of his work at college and of what the professors had said to encourage him, but not a word, I noticed, of Brown or I, his boon companions. At last, he put up a caressing hand and brushed her hair further back upon her forehead. "Do you really love me, Marion?" he asked gently.

"Better than life, Philip."

"And do you believe that I love you—that nothing save love for you could make me trouble or hurt you?"

"Yes," she replied simply and I could see her heart palpitate painfully with fear of what he would say next. I looked eagerly into her face, but if *she* saw either love or pity there, *I* saw nothing but strong purpose and a determination to bend her to his will.

He put his hand on her knee and carefully examined the muscles up to the hip with a physician's gentle touch. She had on only a loose robe and she quivered perceptibly, but whether from fear or modesty I could not tell.

"What is it?" she whispered. "I am quite well."

He buried his face in his hands and remained in this position for a minute, while those beseeching blue eyes sought to read the meaning of his act.

"I am quite well, Philip," she repeated.

Then he roused himself and looked up at her with that gaze which none of us could resist. "There is a disease, my dear, which comes so subtly that in its early stages none but a watchful physician even guesses its existence. How did your mother die?" he concluded, abruptly.

The girl's heart throbbed in her throat so that I could count the beats. She made no answer except to keep her pleading eyes on his face.

"She faded away, dearest," he went on, "with no especial pain and with no disease that her old doctor could put a name to. She was gone before anyone realized she was seriously ill. If he had known what the profession is beginning to learn now, she might have been saved."

The girl's voice was scarcely a whisper. "What is it, Philip? What do you want me to do?"

He held both the quivering hands a moment before answering. "To let the limb go, darling, and save the rest of the precious body."

Her cry will ring in my ears forever. The fright of a child at some monstrosity, the fear of a woman who knows not what she fears, all the terror of a human being on the verge of some dreadful, unknown future, was in that cry. But Dellart's face never softened. He held out his arms after a moment, and she crept into them. He kept her close and caressed and soothed her and told her how he loved her and how, if she would be brave, it would soon be over and the maimed body would be dearer to him than the beautiful whole one had ever been. When she was quiet, he said: "I have put off telling you too long, Marion. Every moment is valuable now."

At this she began to talk to him, still like a child, coaxing, bribing him with soft kisses, begging him to say it was not so and that she needed no operation. And if he had not indeed been an offspring of the Devil, he must have yielded! But he did not yield, and after a while his magnetism had its effect and she consented to do whatever he thought best.

"But you must do it yourself, Philip," she whispered. "I will not have anyone else. You will not mind, will you, dear, when I'd so much rather?"

Mind! May God never forgive him!

"And will you do it now—right away, please?" she said after she had again submitted to those evil, caressing hands. "I can't lie awake night after night, thinking about it, Philip. You know I can't do that."

And so he had his wish. I do not know whether it was days or hours or minutes afterward, but I found myself by the operating table with the ether cone in my hands and with no power either to resist or cry out. And I stood by and watched him sever the beautiful limb from the beautiful body of his young mistress. At last, he held it up and gloated over it with a surgeon's delight in a successful operation, the unconscious girl lying maimed by his diabolical ambition. And then I could endure it no longer. I fainted from the horror of it.

When I came to myself I was in the street staring up at the windows. . . .

I WAS very ill after this, and when at length I became strong enough to resume my duties, I attributed the whole terrible remembrance to the delirium of a fever brought on by excess.

Six months afterward, however, I was walking one night along a brilliantly lighted street when I came face to face with Dellart and the girl of my delusion. She limped a little and when a big, clumsy fellow trod heavily on her foot, seemed surprised at his anxious apology.

The flesh crept on my bones as I realized that the foot, at least, was artificial.

I tore about the streets like a madman. I could not doubt that it was the same girl, though the child-look had completely left her. Nature is not lavish with such faces as that. I felt that unless I had something to drink, I should go mad. I plunged into a saloon and ordered whiskey. I was about to toss it off when I looked up and saw Dellart drinking too. "To my fame as a surgeon," he said, smiling at me. Our glasses clinked and I stood there and drank to his fame and my own damnation. We went out arm-in-arm; I could no more have resisted him than I could the effect of a powerful drug. Again there seemed to be nothing in the world but his personality and mine, and the awful horror toward which he was dragging me. Dellart broke the silence. "You saw my little friend," he said lightly. "A pretty creature, isn't she? Do you know, I believe she has no more idea that she is committing what the world calls a crime by living with me, than she has that I'm not an angel in the form of a man. I wonder how long Purity, itself, can stay pure and hold communion with——" he stopped and laughed softly.

"The Devil!" I muttered. He laughed again and finished quite naturally, "with the Devil!"

When we reached the apartment, Marion was preparing supper with all the dainty appliances of a woman who does such things from choice and not from necessity. I shuddered again as I saw the slight, graceful limp and then I slipped into that horrible room and waited. As I expected, they soon followed. I believe Marion thought he intended dressing the old wound in some way and that he gave her ether to save her pain, for she showed no reluctance whatever. She even laughed a little as he placed her on the table and tried, poor child, to make him think her cheerful.

"Good-bye for a few minutes, my skillful surgeon," she said and then, once more, I put the ether cone to her face and she drifted into unconsciousness. I cannot dwell on this. I sob like a child now when I think of it. But I stood by and helped him cut off one of her sound white arms!

We had hard work bringing her to, but finally she opened her eyes and looked Dellart full in the face. Whether she recognized him or understood what he had done to her, I do not know, but she gave one great cry which I can hear now above all the din of the city, "Oh, God, God, dear God!" and was quiet. Dellart looked up and said carelessly, "A very successful operation, but the patient died. She should have invoked her Divinity sooner." There was not a sign of pity or remorse on his diabolically handsome face.

I took the girl in my arms and snatching up some of the gauze which lay about, wound it about her, covering her from the pollution of his gaze and mine.

As I turned, the room became black as pitch. I stood quite still, trembling in every limb. Then Dellart began cursing, his voice unnatural with terror, and I realized that he was struggling with Something. I could feel Its presence all about me, unreal and awful. All my senses suddenly became merged in one great organ of hearing, and hearing was agony in the supernatural darkness. Every little while Dellart would knock something over, and then he would curse again and call to me to come and help him. But the silence of the unknown being which made no answer to his imprecations was most terrible of all. At last, I heard Dellart cry: "No! For Christ's sake, no!" . . .

In the better parts of every city there are houses concerning which the re-

spectable neighbors feel vague misgivings, though they can allege nothing against the inmates. When I came to myself, I was in the street staring up at the windows of one of these houses. It was daylight and Brown and another fellow had me by the shoulders, shaking me, laughing, and asking "what the Devil" I was staring at.

"I think I've had the D. T.'s and seen him," I said faintly, at which they laughed again. But the laughter froze on their lips. A scream came from above and the voice was Dellart's.

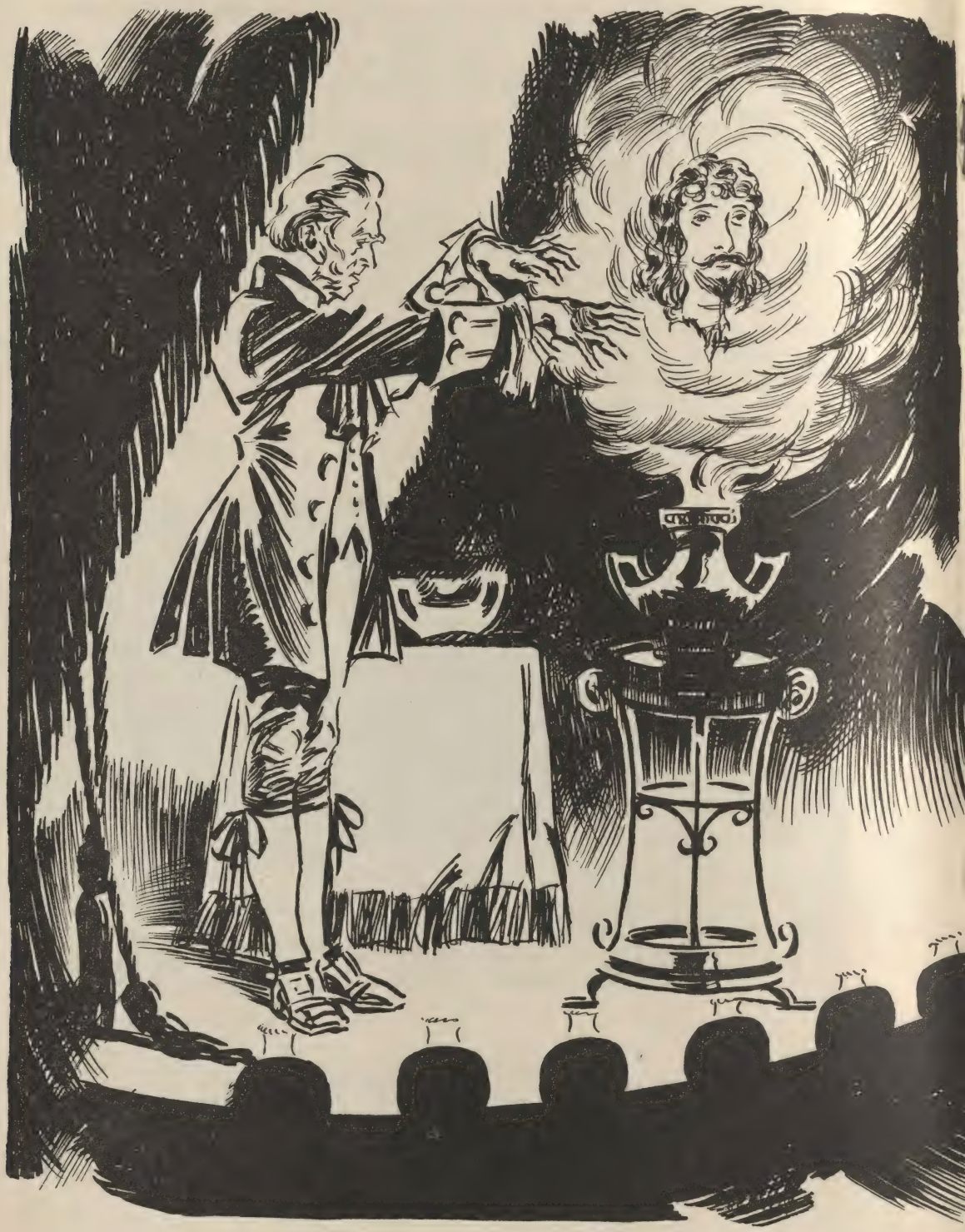
"Dellart!" I gasped. "Dellart is there!" and dashed into the house and up to the operating room. Startled faces peered at me from along the hall but only Brown ventured to follow. On the operating table lay Dellart, his right leg amputated above the knee, his right arm cut clean from the shoulder; and on the floor were the severed limbs, where they had been flung by the operator. The man's eyes were starting from his head, his maimed stumps twisted by more than mortal agony.

On the couch where I had placed her lay Marion's body, mutilated but beautiful, like the "Winged Victory." . . .

THE CURIOUS BED OF SPIKES

Photo by Underwood & Underwood

The holy men of India have long been famous for their actions of self-torture as a form of religious penance. While many ascetics suffer great pain in performing their devotions, there are others who seek to win the acclaim of their followers without injuring themselves; and thus the practice of lying on a bed of spikes, as shown above, has been copied by many of the fakirs and street entertainers



THE GHOST-MAKER

DURING the days of the French Revolution there came to Paris a man named Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, a Belgian optician, just past thirty years of age.

The populace of the French capital was still curiously attracted by ghastly exhibitions, for the days of the guillotine had just passed; and Robertson, sensing the demand of the times, entered into the unique business of ghost making!

He staged his performances in an abandoned chapel. There his audiences assembled and gazed expectantly while the man of mystery created a cloud of weird blue smoke. Then, to the amazement of the spectators, the heads of specters appeared one by one in the mysterious haze.

Hundreds of persons attended the seances. They called for the phantoms of their departed loved ones, and every night a vast procession of ghostly faces flitted across the cloud of smoke. Women fainted at the sight of their dead relations; heroes of the Revolution appeared and vanished; and Robertson was even called upon to produce the image of the martyred Louis XVI.

The Belgian mysticist made much money from his seances; and it was commonly believed that he possessed the power to actually conjure up existing ghosts. But the secret of his performances depended entirely upon mechanical means.

Concave mirrors were used in the illusion. They were concealed from the view of the spectators, and persons representing the phantoms approached them —in fact, portraits were probably used also.

The concave mirrors possessed the property of throwing the reflections in large size on the cloud of smoke; hence the mysterious phantoms which nightly appeared at Robertson's command.

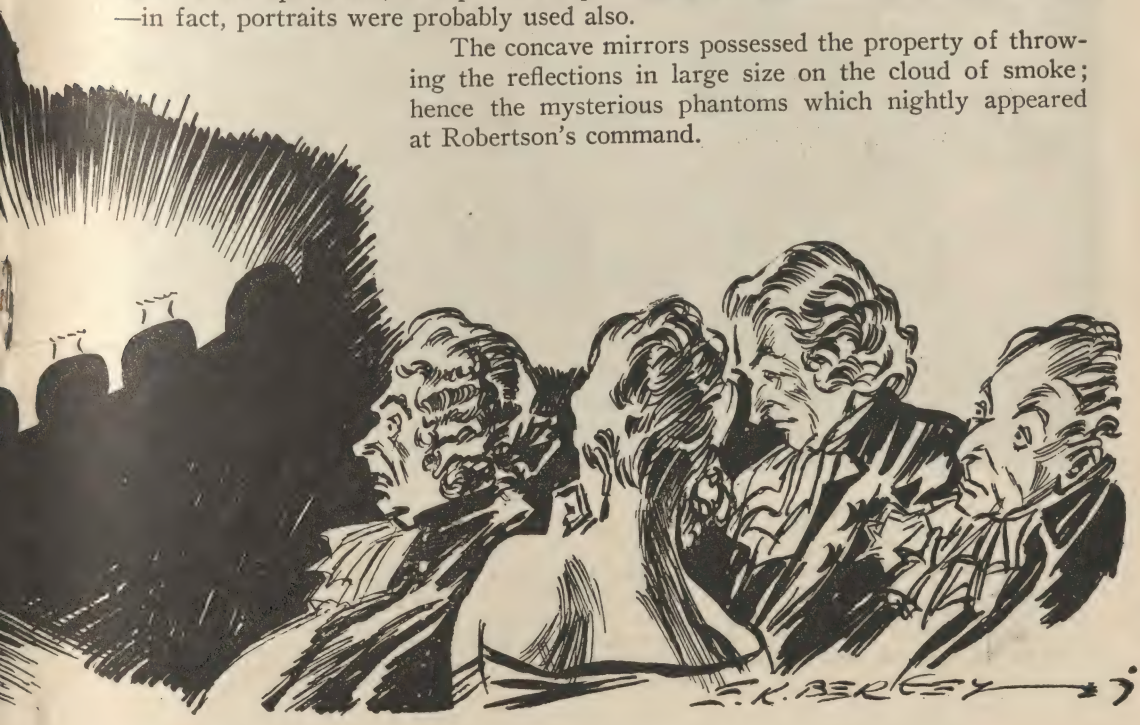
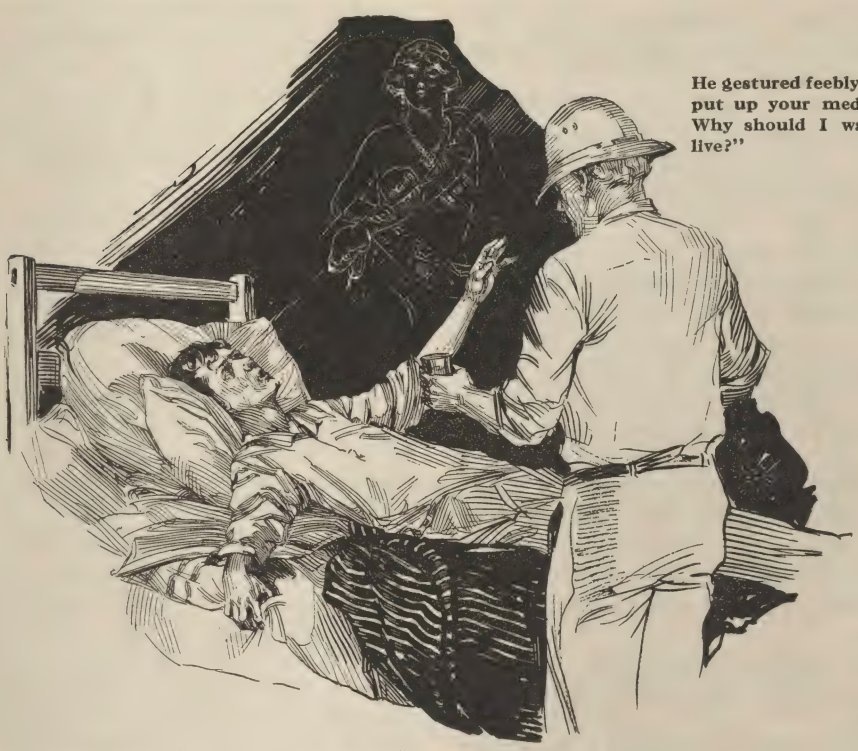


Photo by Underwood & Underwood

RAHMAN BEY, AFTER HIS FAMOUS TEST

RAHMAN BEY, Indian mystic, failed in his test of an hour's submersion in a sealed casket under the Hudson River. After nineteen minutes the emergency bell rang. When the casket was hurriedly ripped open the Bey was still in a trance. Physicians marvelled that he could live in less than eight cubic feet of air even for a period of nineteen minutes



He gestured feebly. "No; put up your medicines. Why should I want to live?"

The Black Pagoda

The Bewildering Adventures of David Keating in the Lost Palace of Laila, in That Once Fertile Central Asian Desert That Extends From the Tien-shan Range of Mountains to the Indian Border near Khotan

By PETER CHANCE

"HE IS possessed of the heat devils and they have made him mad—stark, raving mad, so that he talks strange nonsense we do not understand."

They had appeared unlooked-for out of the Turkestan night, two dark forms that stood between the open flaps of my tent. Between them, on a crude stretcher, was a mound of rags that quivered spasmodically.

"We found him yesterday at dusk," said one. "He was lying beside our rice field and must have come from

some place far distant. See: his clothes are rags and the soles are gone from his boots."

"It was not well that he should die away from his own kin," whispered the other. "So we placed him in our bullock cart and have brought him to you to care for."

Then, as silently as they had come, those two grim messengers were gone.

I turned to the creature they had left. He was so burned and so indescribably filthy that I took him for a native. Little wonder they had thought him mad! He suggested less a thing of flesh and blood than he did some feverish, long-haired apparition from the burning ghât. But suddenly his head moved and, for the first time, I met his intent, boyish, wide-eyed gaze.

Those eyes were of a deep, clear blue!

His lips trembled. An emaciated finger pointed vaguely, and he began to speak:

"They lied to you. It's true they found me by their rice field. It's true I had come far. But it is not true I am mad! . . . Dying—yes. But not mad. . . . Oh, let me be —"

He gestured feebly as I picked him up and deposited him on my cot. Tall though he was, he could scarcely have weighed a hundred pounds.

"No, put up your medicines. Why should I want to live? . . . Sit here beside me and listen while I still have enough strength to tell you. . . . I—*I am David Keating!*"

At mention of that name I started. Well I might! It was but a scant four months since the British Indian Government Service, encouraged by the success of Lord Carnarvon's explorations in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt, had dispatched a similar expedition under Keating to search out those lost palaces which are rumored to be still extant in that once-fertile Central Asian desert that extends from the Tien-shan range of mountains to the Indian border near Khotan.

Of that ill-fated expedition not one man had returned. Our relief corps had found the bleached, gnawed bones of most if its members in the Takla-Makan desert. But the uncertain process of identification had shown no trace of either Keating or of Swamindrath, the Hindu archaeologist who had accompanied him.

What fate had overtaken those two no one knew. But it was conceded that no braver man than Keating could have been found to head that expedition. Young though he was, he had made a reputation two years before by discovering in Lower Tibet the "Caves of the Thousand Buddhas," walled up since the eleventh century—a trip from which he had brought back a fortune in ancient paintings done on silk, to say nothing of priceless manuscripts in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan and Khotanese.

I stared at his fever-blistered countenance, striving to reconcile it with the smiling clean-featured photographs I had seen.

"Did they find the others?" he asked.

"We found their bones," I answered grimly. "All but yours and Swamindrath's."

At mention of that Bengali's name there passed over Keating's face such a look of hatred as I have never seen on any human countenance. I was to learn soon enough the reason for that hate!

The narrative that follows is Keating's own. I have merely smoothed

out some of the incoherencies of his fevered speech. I cannot vouch for it —least of all for that part which concerns the amazingly beautiful and seductive priestess of the Takla-Makan —beyond the fact that it is a faithful record of what David Keating told me during that long night of pain.

I

Beyond the Desert of Fire

FOUR days after we had entered the Takla-Makan desert one of our natives, a big black fellow, went crazy with fever. Before we knew he was amuck he hamstrung our camels and slashed open all but seven of our water bottles. Then he fled, screaming and stark naked, out across the face of that blazing desert.

There was nothing to do but to put everybody on reduced water rations and to push ahead on foot across that sea of sand. I can see those sand dunes now. Crescent-shaped they were, fretted like birds' wings by the wind. At the end of the third night we were so exhausted that we spoke only in monosyllables. During the day, when we camped to sleep, Swamindrath and I took turns standing guard over the water we had left.

Then one sweltering noon I woke to find him gone—and, with him, our two remaining water bottles!

There was no doubt of the direction he had taken. We had set our course by the nearest peak of the Tien-shan range and his trail led that way. But when I woke the others they refused to follow him in that sun. Leaving them to resume their march at night with the supplies, I set out alone in pursuit of Swamindrath.

Never shall I forget that blistering journey! Within an hour my tongue was so swollen that it filled my mouth. About me were only those eternal waves of red sand. Now and then I came upon a withered tamarisk or some reeds that rattled like dry, dead things as I strode through them. But as far as I could see the dizzy heat waves shimmered over that desert of fire, while always, in the distance, like some ironic mirage, rose the snow-clad slopes of the Tine-shan mountains.

By mid-afternoon I was stumbling. I began to despair of ever overtaking a man refreshed by water. The only thing that made me keep on was the thought that, somewhere, in that blazing, quivering plain before me was Swamindrath—and water!

As the sun was setting I came on the limp skin of the first bottle.

God knows how eagerly I sprang on it! It was empty, dry as the desert, and it felt hot to my touch. But a sudden hope sprang up in my heart:

If he had drunk so much he should be bloated as a toad. The chance were that, instead of fleeing much further, he would lie down to rest. In less than an hour I came upon him.

He was sleeping in the scant shade of a clump of tamarisks. His head was pillowed on the second water bottle; his mouth was open and he was snoring faintly. I must have sprung upon him like some frenzied beast, for until he jerked out a knife it did not occur to me he might be armed.

Over and over we rolled upon those sharp, red, blistering sands, I envied him the very sweat that streamed from his pores. At last I fell on top of him, my knee in the small of his back. One of my hands clutched the wrist of the hand in which he held

his knife. A feeling of savage triumph swept over me.

But his other hand was free. With that hand he reached out and, before I realized what he was doing, he jerked out the stopper of the last water bottle.

No one but that calculating Hindu would have thought of such a trick. The fiend knew that every impulse of my tortured body must be to release him in the hope of recovering that water. Without it I could never hope to stagger to the desert's edge. He, on the other hand, was gorged on the first bottle and still had a chance of winning through without it. But even as my grip slackened I realized that, if I tried to save the water, his knife would be plunged in my back.

In that instant I made my decision. If I must die that traitor should die, too. It seemed an eternity that I lay there, panting, on top of him, and watched the water trickle away into the sand.

When the bottle was quite empty I threw him over with a sudden movement that pinioned his knife hand beneath his body. My fingers sank into his throat. I felt faint. The red waves of sand seemed to surge up and down. I had a ghastly fear that I should lose consciousness and relax my grip of Swamindrath before I had quite choked him. His mouth opened and his tongue lolled out. His eyes took on a glassy gaze. His whole body seemed to shiver convulsively beneath me. . . .

Then a hand fell on my shoulder and I was smatched away. I had a dazed impression of two huge, dark-skinned, white-turbaned figures who had appeared like apparitions out of the desert. One of them struck at me and I reeled into unconsciousness.

HOW long I was unconscious I do not know. I came to gradually as from a long and heavy sleep. Even before I had completely recovered my senses I had an impression of being carried on a litter, and it seemed to me that I had been traveling so for hours. The thing that finally made me open my eyes was the sudden cessation of that swinging motion and the feel of cold water trickling into my mouth.

Leaning over me was one of the white-turbaned giants who had attacked us. Seeing I had recovered consciousness, he drew away and gave some gruff command. The litter on which I lay was lifted on the shoulders of four men and the journey recommenced.

To my right the desert still stretched out into infinity. It was no longer a plain of fire, but one of silver. The moon had risen and the air was cool with the night wind that comes down

A gong sounded, and the priests formed in a huge circle around the funeral pyre

from the snow-clad slopes of the mountains.

I tried to move my hands, only to discover that they were bound. I rolled over and found myself staring into Swamindrath's dark face framed in its tousled mass of black hair and beard. He lay beside me and was also bound.

"You're almost out of the desert," he said laconically. "We're skirting the foothills now. Those are the deodars off to the left."

I think no one but that suave Bengali would have been capable of so completely ignoring the all but mortal combat we had just engaged in. He spoke as if we were on some pleasant excursion. In his voice there was a faint trace of the accent he had picked up during his four years at Cambridge.

"Who are these men?" I asked. "Where are they taking us?"

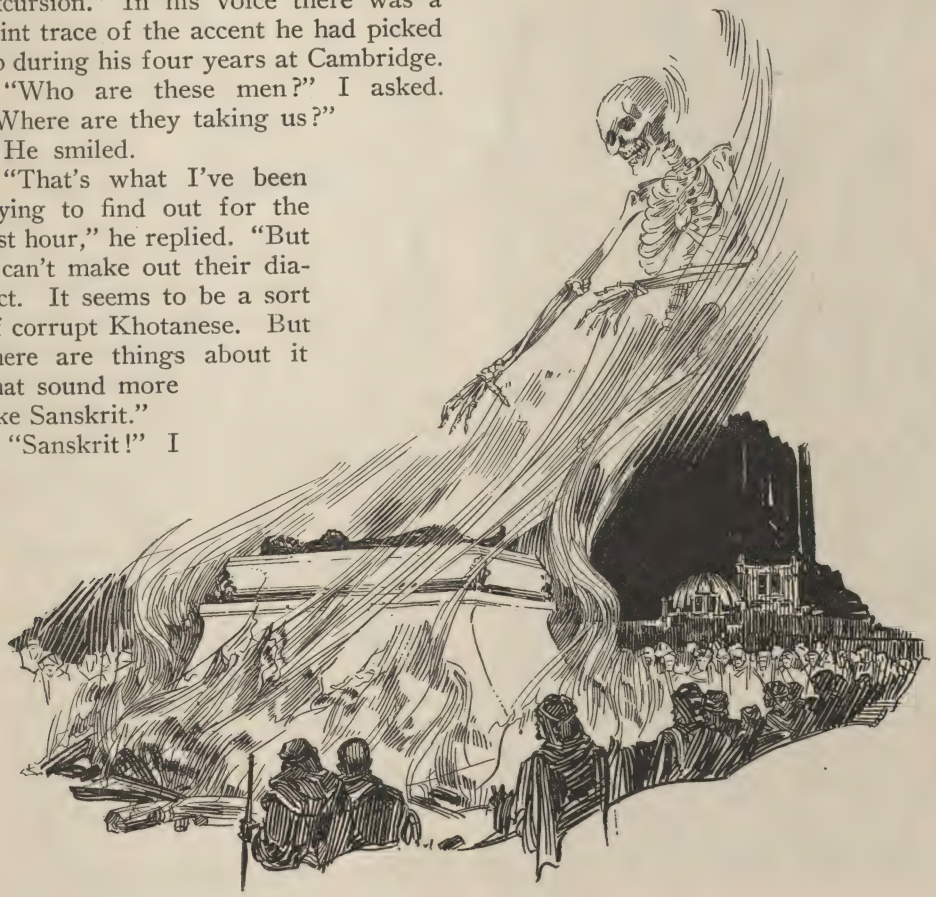
He smiled.

"That's what I've been trying to find out for the last hour," he replied. "But I can't make out their dialect. It seems to be a sort of corrupt Khotanese. But there are things about it that sound more like Sanskrit."

"Sanskrit!" I cried. "But that's been obsolete for centuries."

"So we thought," he answered calmly. "But you will recall that Sanskrit was the original tongue of India, from which most of the modern dialects are derived. . . . Is it after all impossible that some religious sect of the Hatha-Yogi should have retreated into those fastnesses beyond the desert and maintained their mother tongue and their own civilization intact here for centuries?"

I stared at him in blank amazement. Swamindrath was a philologist of the first order. In fact, that was the only reason I had brought him along on the expedition. In the event of our dis-



covering the lost palaces we had come in search of, I knew he would be invaluable in deciphering any ancient manuscripts which we might find. But now he was not only suggesting that those palaces were still extant, but that they were actually inhabited by the descendants of the race of men who had established them!

"Could you make out anything at all from what they said?"

"Very little," he confessed. "But there is one word that they keep repeating—Laïla. A proper name, evidently. In Sanskrit the suffix 'la' is feminine. I suspect she is some sort of priestess of their sect to whom they are taking us."

"A priestess in the Takla-Makan!" I cried.

He shrugged his shoulder.

"Why not?" he asked. "You know as well as I that this whole vast basin, extending westward into Chinese Turkestan, was once made fertile by the waters that poured down from the snows of the surrounding mountains. In the place of this wilderness of drifting sand there once stood the palaces and cities of the lost Aryan civilization."

"And you think that, as the sands buried this vast district, the people who once inhabited it edged back into other palaces and cities established nearer to the water sources on the Tien-shan mountains?"

"How else would you explain the survival of Sanskrit as a spoken tongue?"

I made no reply. But it flashed across me that that was the hypothesis that the gallant Captain Fitzpatrick had held when, in 1912, he had set forth on his expedition into this district for the British Museum. I had been present at the farewell banquet given in his honor and I recalled vividly his florid, firm-featured face and the merry Irish twinkle in his blue eyes.

Alas, the intrepid explorer never had returned from that expedition! It gave me a thrill now to know that I was following in the footsteps of so brave a man.

Gradually the stars faded in the sky. A pink flush appeared upon the summit of one distant mountain. Long fingers of light groped from peak to peak, changing those snow-clad slopes to salmon pink, peach color and to rose, while the basin in which we traveled was still submerged in night.

Suddenly the sun itself appeared and the whole desert was illuminated. There, directly before me, at the base of a mighty mountain, I saw for the first time the Palace of Laïla!

II

The Voice of the Past

TIER on tier it rose before me. It was like the culmination of some fantastic dream. The mighty dome itself must have been three hundred feet in height. That dome and the whole central portion of the palace was of white marble, streaked with black; but the outlying terraces and pavilions were of red sandstone from the desert.

It was the most perfect example of early Buddhist architecture I have ever seen. Nowhere could I discern a trace of the corrupting Mohammedan influence. Apparently the Mohammedan invasion had not extended this far. Vigorous and bold it stood there, facing the vast desert, while behind it rose the eternal snow-capped mountains.

Even Swamindrath gazed spell-

bound as we were borne over the outer terraces and through the great jade gate. Then I saw that the palace was built on the plan of a great rectangle in the center of which was a garden covering several acres. Have you ever come out of the desert into some wonderful oasis? Then you can understand how I felt. Only this garden was more wonderful than any oasis that I had ever seen.

I could not forget the desperation of our struggle . . .

Fountains shot their spray so high into the air that the early morning sunlight, streaming over the roofs of the palace, became rainbow hued in their mist. Strange plumaged birds flew through this mist, bathed in pools of water at the base of the fountains and kept up an incessant singing in the olive and pomegranate trees. Beneath an ornate pagoda covered with some exotic vine our litter was set down. The bonds were removed from our wrists and we were allowed to stretch our cramped limbs.

Then, at a gesture from one of our guards, we followed him to a fountain, where we undressed. For the first time in weeks we bathed. Ah, the luxury of that clear, cold water flowing over our parched bodies! It seemed to me that I had never known such ecstasy.

Somewhere a great gong sounded.

At that signal the entire west wall of the palace court seemed suddenly to come to life. From hundreds of little rooms, that were like the cells of some ancient monastery, there came out onto the balconies white-turbaned men in flowing white robes. Facing the sun, they prostrated themselves upon the balconies. At a second signal from the gong, they rose slowly, and suddenly the whole court resounded to their solemn chant. It was such music as I had never heard before—Chinese in its motif, rather than occidental. There was something barbaric about it and, at the same time, solemnly magnificent and dignified. I felt a thrill run down my spine.

Swamindrath turned toward me, his dark body still gleaming with the water of the fountain.

"They must be priests," he whispered. "This is their hymn to the sun."

Suddenly the chant ceased and those hundreds of white-robed choristers returned to their cells.

From across the court a giant Yogi was coming toward us. He must have been seven feet in height. Like our captors, he was clad in white; but his robe was embroidered in gold. A pinkish scar cut one of his brown cheeks and gave him a peculiarly evil and ferocious look.

He talked for a minute with our guards and then signed for us to dress.

From the main court he then conducted us to a smaller court opening into it. It was perhaps fifty feet in length and it also contained a fountain and was gay with flowers. Upon a little terrace at its far end was a table, apparently set for breakfast, and, behind this table, a tall man in a white robe was strolling back and forth. Unlike the others we had seen, he wore no turban. His back was toward us as we entered and he was whistling to himself.

Do you know what he was whistling? It was a tune that had made a hit in the music halls of London eight years ago!

The man turned. I saw that his hair was white and close-cropped. He was smoking a cheroot. For just a second I was in doubt. Then I knew —I knew that I was standing face to face with Captain Fitzpatrick!

HIS carriage was as erect, his face as firmly featured as when I had seen him last, some seven years before. Only his hair had turned to silver and the old familiar twinkle was gone from his blue Irish eyes.

For a moment he stood stock still looking at us. I had a strange feeling that he was about to bolt and run away from us as if he were ashamed. Then he transferred his cheroot to his left hand and, with a little smile, held out his hand to me.

"Mr. Keating, I think?"

"Captain Fitzpatrick!"

With the same quiet smile he turned to Swamindrath.

"I believe we have not met. But I once had the pleasure of listening to an address which you delivered in London before the Society for Psychical Research."

We were both too dumfounded to reply. It was he who went on:

"You arrive in time for breakfast, gentlemen. I hope you bring good appetites. Unfortunately I have just finished; but I can at least enjoy your company."

He spoke to the giant Yogi, who at once set places for us at the table.

"I recommend the pomegranates," remarked Captain Fitzpatrick. "It is only in the last week they have ripened. But I'm afraid I can't say much for the tea. Ever since I came here I have been trying to get them to brew it in the English manner, but they seem incapable of learning. Have you by any chance an English cigarette?"

I whipped out my case. Gold Flakes, I think they were. Tossing away his cheroot, he accepted one and began to smoke it reflectively.

I stared at him, I had not yet recovered from my first shock of surprise at finding him alive. But I already found his manner strange. It was as if he were making a tremendous effort to be casual. In his blue eyes was a secretive look. It suggested guilt, a knowledge of things he dared not mention.

"My God, Captain," I blurted. "What is this palace? Where are we?"

He smiled his slow smile.

(*Continued on page* 60)

A view of Houdini submitting to one of his famous submersion tests

Houdini

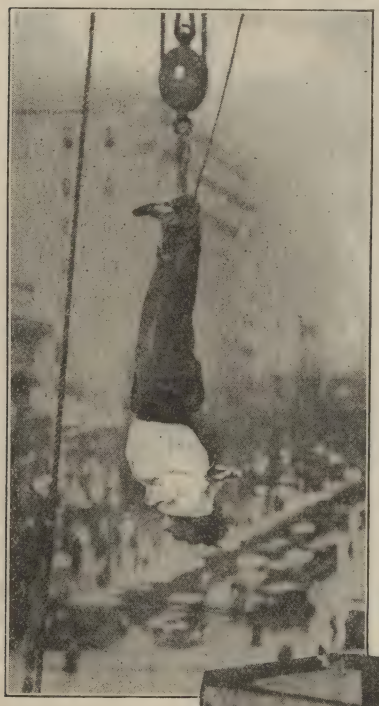
Relating Some of the Hazardous Adventures of This Famous Escape Wizard

By WALTER B. GIBSON

FOR twenty years the name Houdini has held a peculiar significance in the minds of the public —a significance which did not decrease with his passing in October, 1926.

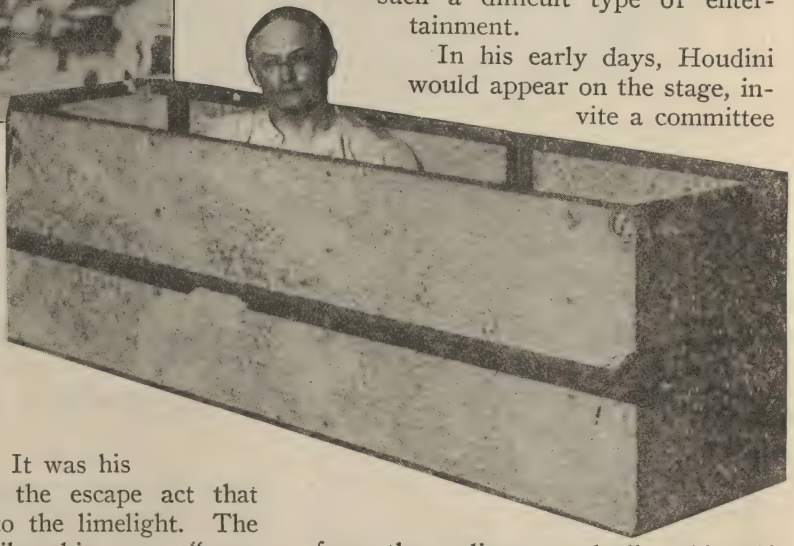
This is because Houdini was unique. He attempted amazing feats which were new and unusual, and he was invariably successful. To the average person he was an enigma, and his secrets were unexplainable. His famous escapes were a source of wonder to millions of people, and they could hardly attempt to explain his methods.

The "secrets of Houdini" were looked upon with awe. Some believed he was a contortionist; others considered him as a being of almost superhuman power; but those who really knew him realized that he was a great showman who understood the public.



Houdini escaping from a strait jacket while suspended one hundred feet in the air.

Below—Houdini in the metal box used in his submersion

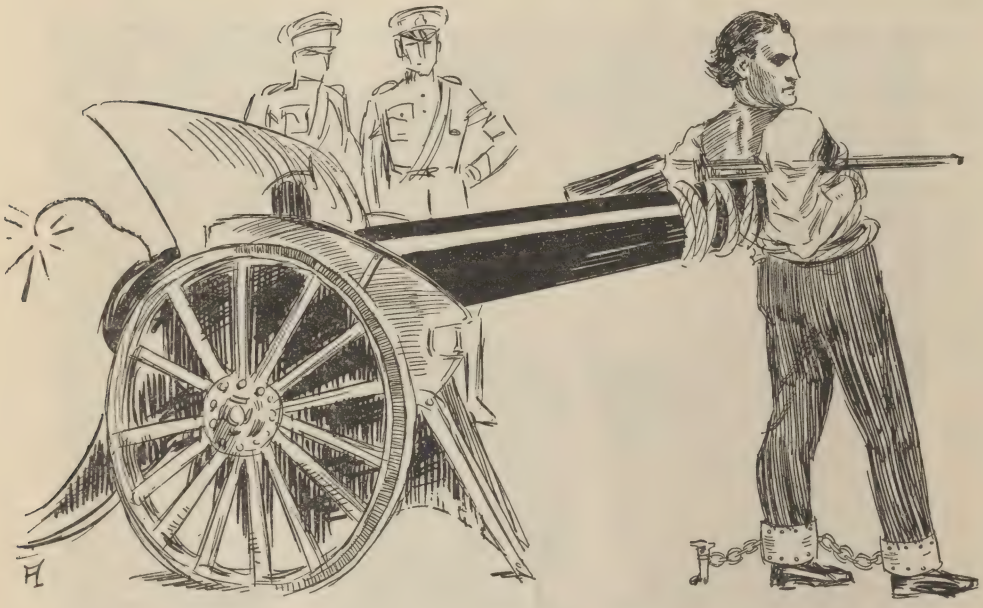


Houdini began his professional career as a magician, but he did not gain his fame through magic. It was his development of the escape act that brought him into the limelight. The dictionary describes him as a "mystericist, wizard, and expert in extrication and self-release." It was not until he had attained twenty years of fame in extrication and self-release that he appeared with his full evening magical show; and then nearly half of his program consisted of escapes, and exposures of fraudulent spirit mediums.

Harry Houdini cannot properly be placed in the line of famous modern magicians that includes Robert-Houdin, the Herrmanns, de Kolta, Kellar and Thurston. Instead of gradually achieving a reputation in the art of magic, he rose to sudden prominence with a new type of mystery which he developed to an amazing degree. He was an outstanding figure of the twentieth century—a stage performer whose greatest exploits occurred off the stage.

Houdini had competitors in his own field. There were others who claimed to be handcuff kings, but none of them attained great fame, because they were not equal to the task of presenting such a difficult type of entertainment.

In his early days, Houdini would appear on the stage, invite a committee from the audience, and allow himself to be shackled or locked in some contrivance. Then a cabinet was lowered over him, and for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes—or even an hour—he was



Lashed to a cannon, with the burning fuse set for twenty minutes, Houdini effected his release

hidden from his audience. At the end of the particular period he would emerge from the cabinet free of his bonds. The spectators saw nothing of the actual release. They spent their time looking at a closed cabinet, yet they enjoyed it! This was because Houdini was a master showman who could convince his audience that he was about to attempt something sensational; who could make their interest endure while he was out of sight; and who could win their acclaim when he had achieved his escape. Other performers who presented similar acts succeeded only in boring their audiences.

The fact that Houdini had no great rivals and that most of his work was done out of sight are two important reasons why his secrets did not become generally known. A man who knows magic can figure out the method of a new illusion when he sees it on the stage; but to explain something which takes place out of one's view requires a good deal of guesswork.

Houdini a Great Challenger

NEXT to his showmanship, the great secret of Houdini's success was his willingness to accept any challenge, on or off the stage. He was always ready to attempt the unusual, and he gained immense publicity through his challenges. In many cities where he appeared he performed the celebrated jail escape. He worked his way out of cells and prisons in New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Newark, Detroit, Chicago, Washington, Buffalo and other American cities; during his European travels he es-

HARRY HOUDINI

caped from jails in London, Sheffield, Moscow, Liverpool, Manchester, Amsterdam, and The Hague.

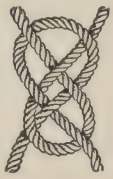
On the stage, he escaped from piano cases, milk cans, cages, straight-jackets, desks, and mail pouches. He also freed himself from safes, vaults, and other contrivances.

About the year 1911, Houdini produced one of his greatest escapes, the Chinese Water Torture Cell, which remained in his program until his last performance in 1926. His feet were locked in stocks, and he was lowered head foremost into an upright cabinet filled with water. The front of the cabinet was made of glass, so that the audience could see him upside down, while the top of the casket was padlocked. Then the cloth was lowered over him, and in about three minutes he came through the curtains, dripping wet. The cloth was raised to show the water cell still locked. All this took place while a committee from the audience was on the stage.

Needless to say, there was an element of danger in this performance. The same was true of Houdini's celebrated under water escape, in which he was dropped overboard from a bridge, handcuffed in a packing case which was nailed tight shut. The case was weighted with three hundred pounds of pig-iron which made it sink immediately, and a quick escape was absolutely necessary. Houdini performed this feat in many cities.

In all of these amazing exploits Houdini relied upon his great strength and his iron nerve. He was powerfully built, and a very dynamo of energy. He studied his escapes and he knew what he could do. The public is always fascinated by a dangerous exhibition, and Houdini played upon that fascination.

Many of the feats which thrilled the public were merely incidents in the career of Houdini. But there were others in which the element of danger was present to an unusual degree—times when Houdini accepted a challenge which nearly cost him his life.



Strangely enough, few of these adventures were told to the public. It was a known fact that Houdini exposed himself to great risks and frequently defied death. Several of his imitators lost their lives attempting to duplicate his exploits. But in all the long list of Houdini's amazing adventures, only one man could tell which were the most dangerous and the most thrilling, and that man was Houdini himself.

A few months before his death, I spoke about this to Houdini, and expressed surprise that he had not told these stories. He agreed that they were worth telling, and offered to relate them. He gave the subject consideration, and in Worcester, Massachusetts, a few weeks before his death, he dictated notes which appear in this article. These stories are personal glimpses of Houdini's active life, and they form one of his last important interviews.

The Famous Milk Can Escape

ONE of Houdini's greatest escapes was that of releasing himself from a milk can. In London, England, he was playing at the Euston Music Hall, and it was proposed that he escape from a huge milk churn. As the escape was to be a long and difficult one, holes were bored in the top of the churn to admit air. Houdini was placed in the churn; the lid was clamped down; the cabinet was lowered over him, and the adventure began.

"The churn," said Houdini, "was a huge one, but I was cramped for space, and realized that my position was a difficult one. A few moments elapsed, during which I had made little progress, when I suddenly realized that it was difficult for me to breathe. The small holes that admitted air were too tiny to supply the amount I needed, and I was in great danger of suffocation.

"I realized that in my efforts to escape I was exhausting the available oxygen. It was useless to shout for help, as my cries would not be heard. It was up to me to get out in record time.

"I struggled my hardest to effect a quick release. I rocked the churn back and forth, but could not escape, and precious moments were passing. Suddenly, in my thrashing, I overturned the churn, and it fell on the stage.

"The cover was held down by clamps, and as luck would have it, the churn fell so that one of those clamps struck the floor, and the blow dislodged it. The cover came loose, and I pushed it off. The air rushed in. I was safe, and free from the churn! Yet it was a narrow escape—one that seemed impossible, and that came in the nick of time.

"While in England, I offered to meet all challenges, and I received many ingenious proposals. I effected all the required escapes, but finally one arrived that involved mental as well as physical hazards."

Here is a copy of the challenge, which was mailed on Valentine's Day!

Chatham, February 14, 1911.

Mr. Harry Houdini,

Dear Sir—We challenge you to stand in front of a loaded Government 8 cwt. steel gun, to which we will secure you, insert a fuse which will burn twenty minutes, and if you fail to release yourself within that time you will be blown to Kingdom Come.

In lashing you to the muzzle of the gun we will place a rifle barrel between your arms behind your back, bringing your hands on your breast, where we will securely lash them. Your feet we will tie to an iron ring which we will nail into the floor. Your body we will lash against the muzzle of the gun in such a manner that we believe it will be impossible for you to free yourself.

Test must take place in full view of the public.

The challenge was signed by four petty officers of the navy, all skilled in tying the intricate knots only a sailor knows.

"I accepted the challenge," said Houdini, "and it was arranged to take place a few days later. The naval men were there with their cannon and ropes, and a large crowd was present. I had often escaped from coils of ropes, but never at the mouth of a cannon!

A Test of Nerve and Skill

"THE naval men lived up to their part of the agreement. They lashed me firmly to the gun, and used every effort to make escape impossible. My elbows were in back of me, with a rod thrust through, and my hands were tied in front. It was a most difficult and dangerous position. Then they set off the fuse, allowing me twenty minutes to go.

"The situation required quick action. I struggled and worked at my best. I lived up to my reputation, and freed myself in twelve minutes!

"But there is one incident about that adventure that stands out in my mind even more than my thrilling race against destruction—one of those humorous occurrences that happen in the face of danger. That was a remark made by the Chatham chief of police.

"Before the tying commenced, that officer approached me, shook his head dubiously, and said:

(*Continued on page 64*)

Slave of the Poppy

Wildwood Had Had Adventures—Splendid Ones. At Times the Glory of the World Had Been So Dazzling, the Wine of Life So Strong, That He Had Felt More Like a God Than a Man. And So He Continued a Slave of the Poppy Until——

By N. W. JENKINS

AT THE hour of sunset, Wildwood awoke from a cold, frightened sleep, on his uneasy bed in the west attic of the Chateau Villaret. He lay for a moment and then arose and dressed himself with shaking hands.

"You're a mask of death," he said, as he passed the looking glass. He turned out his empty pockets, cursing them and the nakedness of the stripped garret. As he descended to the street, clinging to the old rosewood rail of the endless stairway, he had two thoughts in his mind. One was "Does life hold any more adventures for me?" and the other: "Where can I get a grain of heroin tonight?"

Wildwood had had adventures—splendid ones. At times, the glory of the world had been so dazzling, the wine of life so strong, that he had felt more like a god than a man. But the long level stretches between such heights—he had all but died of those, until he discovered heroin. Finally certain things had transpired, necessitating his departure from home, and he had come to New Orleans.

The Chateau, a magnificent mansion once, a rookery now, was a place one could live in for almost nothing. He lived there for quite a long while behind the black, but beautiful oriel window that looked out into the sky.

But the heroin? From whence was that to come? The druggists would give him no further credit, though he had been a doctor once, and a good one. He had nothing left to sell, everything negotiable having passed under the Three Balls long before. Work—there was none for him.

So there remained only—the bread line? D—n their bread! It was heroin he wanted. There was the river! And the river it would have to be unless something turned up quickly. He detested the idea. Not that he was afraid—not he! But death appeared to be the end of everything. One couldn't be sure, of course, but it looked that way, and—*Quien Sabe?* There might be more adventures in this life, if he could hang on a little longer, and that was worth suffering for, instead of the black water, and oblivion.

A light step on the stair, a lighter hand on the door, and Lalage entered

He was dreaming wide awake, it seemed. That morning he had seen Lalage around a street corner as he turned it. He had fled wildly, forgetting that she, being but a dream figment, couldn't see him. Lalage was the girl he had loved. He loved her still.

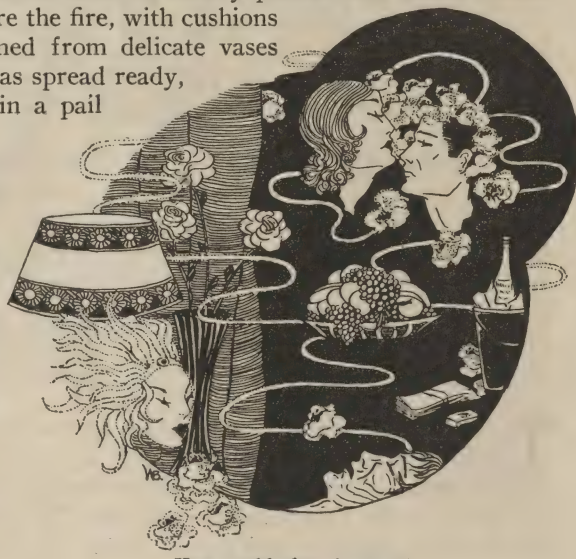
The heroin! The terrible pang in his heart told him he must have heroin or die. He dashed away; then, remembering that he was on the street, drew himself up, and bracing his wrecked body with a great effort, sought the business streets.

TOWARD midnight Wildwood returned. He had drifted back because his limbs would no longer support him, and he had need of a place to die in. Under his feet as he walked he could hear a curious, cottony sound: *pad, pad.* He felt in his body, a vast, immeasurable emptiness. He turned a corner, and the Chateau Villaret loomed up before him. The oriel window was aglow with light—colored like a rose—and behind the glass hung crisp, lacy curtains. He drew in his breath sharply.

Up the interminable stairs he climbed, one step at a time. He stood at his own door, trembling, before opening it.

A fire of logs leaped and sparkled in the hearth—that late damp abode of mice and spiders. Soft radiance poured from a rose shaded lamp. A Persian rug hid the worm-eaten flooring. In the place of his bed of planks and the torn blanket was an alluring couch, a snow bank of downy pillows and silken coverlets. A lovely fauteuil stood before the fire, with cushions heaped beside it. Tall roses leaned from delicate vases on the mantel. A buffet supper was spread ready, and a gold-necked bottle lurked in a pail of ice. And—oh, Paradise!—on a tiny tray beneath the lamp lay a dainty hypodermic syringe and a vial of heroin tablets. . . . .

Five minutes later, he went out, with a firm, assured step, running lightly down the stairs, in his pocket the roll of yellow backed bills he had found beside the tablets. Quickly he visited the barber, the tailor, the haberdasher, and outfitted himself suitably. It does not take long to do these things when a man feels young and strong, and has the wherewithal.



How could they know of his triumphant passing?

RETURNING, in broadcloth and fine linen, a tuberose in his buttonhole, he stood again in the attic before the bright mirror that had miraculously taken the place of the cracked bit of glass. His appearance was irreproachable, from his high-flung dark head to his graceful, varnished boots. He had all the properties with him—silk hat, lightweight overcoat, toy cane, gold-banded cigar between his finger tips. "You're a handsome devil, Wildwood," he remarked encouragingly.

A light step on the stair, a lighter hand on the door, and Lalage entered, as he had known she would. Lalage, lovelier than ever!

He would gladly have lingered in rapt contemplation of her beauty—the glory of her eyes, the roseleaf softness of her cheek, the lustre of her hair; and her nymph-like form, in its shimmering garments such as nymph never wore. But she gave a glad little cry, and flew to his arms, like a homing bird.

THE clock struck three. Wildwood reclined in the fauteuil, Lalage at his feet, her head against his knee.

"I have done nothing but seek you, Richard," she was saying, "since I came into grandmother's millions. You were all I wanted. But I should never have found you, had it not been for the Little Minister."

"Who's he, Sweetheart?"

"The Chaplain at the Army Post down the river. And oh, he's the *best* little sport ever! He—he cares for me, Richard, just as I care for you. And he knows—about us."

"He knows? You told him, Lalage? *Everything?"*

"Everything. Richard, it was too wonderful that he should have been sent here, where you were. It was he who traced you, and told me where to find you. I want him to marry us, tomorrow. And then we'll go away, traveling. We'll put a girdle round the earth, Dicky, like Puck. We can have the *best* times! We'll have some of those adventures you used to dream of!"

Wildwood, kissing her softly, wondered a little. Does a man have real adventures, after he is married? He looked at her and smiled. "Lalage," he said gently, "you don't—you are perfectly *sure* you don't feel it a sacrifice?"

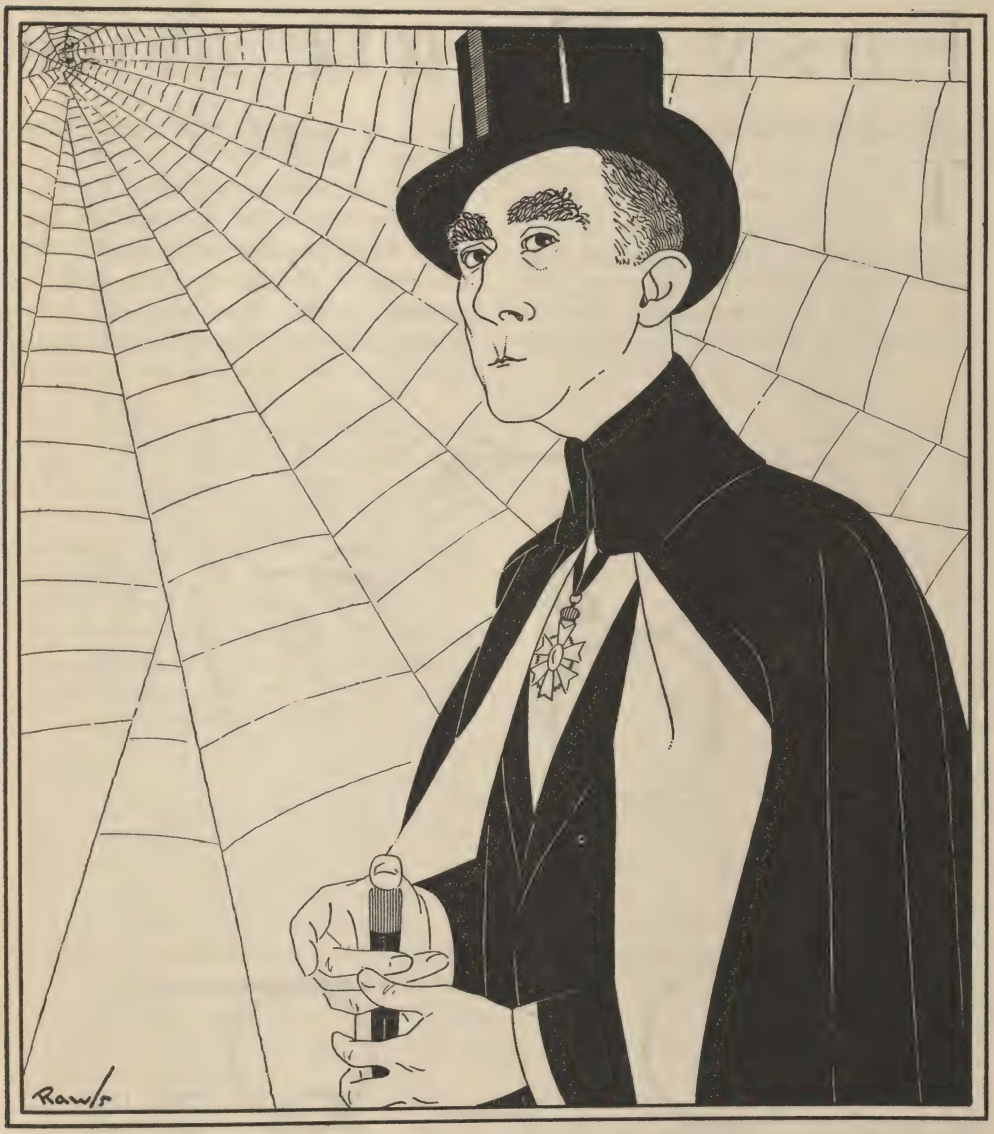
She caught him to her heart, crying aloud at the sacrilege.

FOUR O'CLOCK. She had fallen so sound asleep that she could lift her head from his knee to the cushioned chair without awakening her. He stood for a moment, and watched her as she slept. Then, tiptoeing to the table, he deftly slipped the contents of the little vial into a champagne glass, and watched the hypodermic drink it up. A prick, a pang—such a pleasing little pang!—and it was done. He stood on the Persian rug, gazing thoughtfully into the fire. "The best of them all," he said. "The adventure of the enchanted garret!" And he lay down to sleep, with his head in the lap of Lalage.

THOSE who found him huddled on the floor, beside the cold hearth, felt a thrill of pity, that he should have died so miserably, and alone. How could they know of his triumphant passing—of the exquisite madness, vouchsafed to the Slave of the Poppy, at the very end, before the light goes out? *They* little imagined the splendor and delight of his last hours.

THE EARLY MAGIC LANTERN

The magic lantern is supposed to have been invented in the middle ages. In its crude form it was used to throw huge figures of demons upon the walls of fortresses to frighten the hosts of invading forces. The superstitious soldiers of those days were often panic stricken by the unexpected appearance of the phantom monsters.



JOHN HALLIDAY, IN "THE SPIDER"

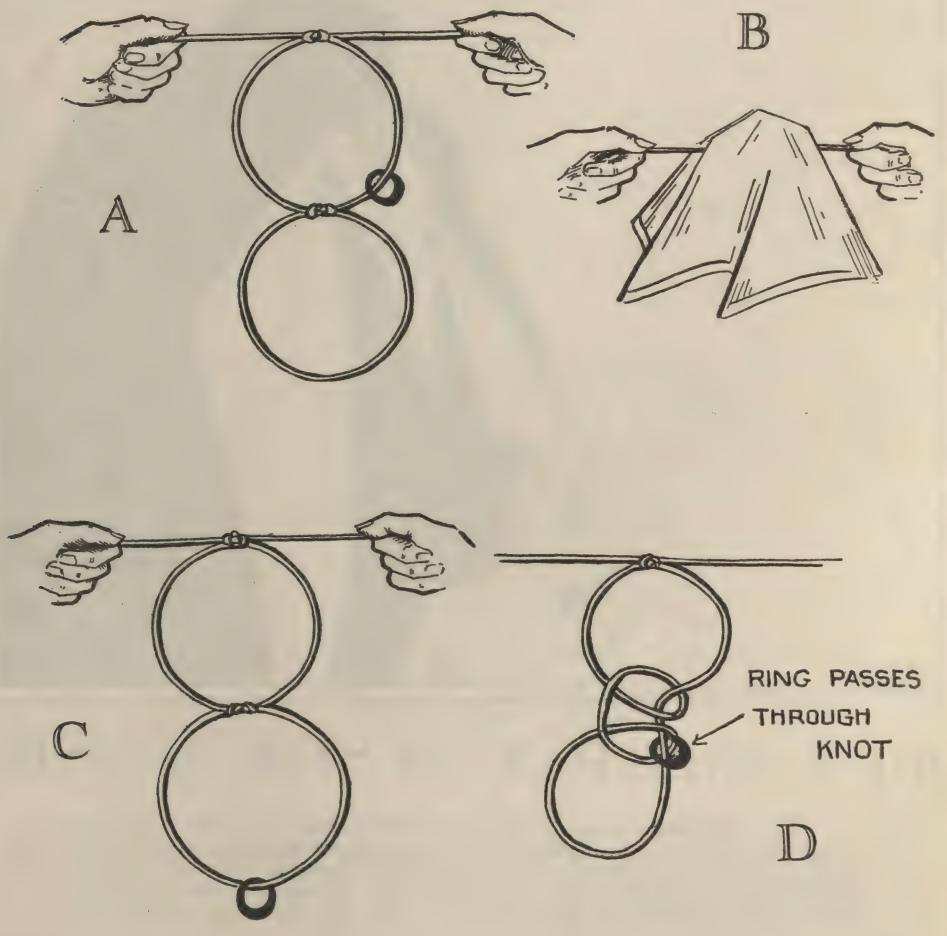
Last season's biggest mystery hit was Fulton Oursler's play, "The Spider." In it you are supposed to be sitting in a vaudeville house watching a sleight-of-hand performance. Suddenly the lights go out, a shot is heard, there is general confusion and a gentleman is discovered lying in the aisle with a bullet through his heart. John Halliday, as caricatured above by Rawls, enjoyed considerable distinction as one of the leading characters in the play

Easy Magic You

The Mysterious Traveling Ring

THE requirements for this little mystery are a piece of string about eighteen inches or two feet in length, a borrowed finger ring, and a handkerchief. With these simple articles the impromptu magician apparently accomplishes the impossibility of passing one solid object through another!

First the string is tied in a regulation square knot or double knot, leaving a small loop below the knot. Then the ring is placed on the string and another double knot is tied a few inches above it. The ends of the string



The drawings A, B, and C show the effect of the trick as it appears to the spectators. Drawing D illustrates the performer's action beneath the handkerchief

Can Do

are held by two persons, as shown in illustration A.

It is impossible to remove the ring from the string, and the knots prevent it from falling from the upper loop to the lower.

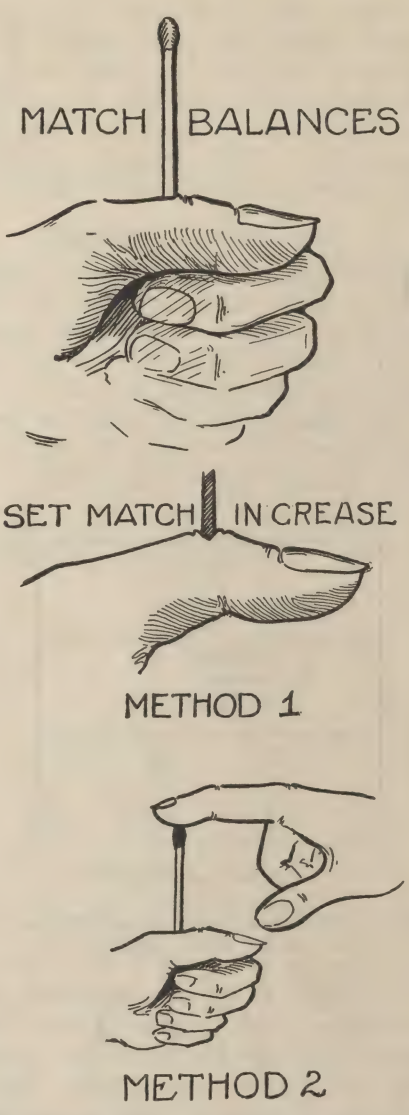
The handkerchief is thrown over the knots, and it hides the ring and the loops; but the ends of the string are still in view. (Illustration B.)

The performer reaches beneath the handkerchief, raising one side so that he can see beneath. In a few moments he removes the handkerchief. The ring is on the lower loop (illustration C), apparently having passed through the solid double knot!

The secret of the trick is simple; yet the method of its accomplishment is never suspected.

The double knot between the loops is not tied tightly. The performer loosens it under cover of the handkerchief, and he then finds that he can push the ring along the string and *right through the knots,* on to the loop beneath. (See illustration D.) Then he draws the knots as tight as possible, and removes the handkerchief.

With a little practice, this can be performed very rapidly. Everything may be examined and the result is extremely puzzling.



The balanced match is easy, yet effective. In method 2, some performers obtain best results by pressing the match just in back of the thumb-nail

The Balanced Match

A CLEVER and deceptive impromptu trick.

The magician sets a match on the back of his thumb, and it balances there until he removes it!

The easiest method of performing this is to bend the thumb slightly, set the end of the match in the crease of the thumb, and then straighten the thumb, the match then remaining upright.

But those who may know the old method will be astonished to see the performer set the match just in back of the thumb nail, and yet balance it.

To do this, press the end of the match firmly into the flesh. This forms a base for the match, and if the hand is kept carefully in position the equilibrium of the match may be maintained. This requires a little more practice than the old method.

The Mental Mystery

THE magician folds a small sheet of paper into nine squares and invites a spectator to write his name in the center. Then the squares are torn apart and dropped in a hat.

Reaching behind his back, the performer puts his hand in the hat and draws out the written slip of paper!

The name is written on the center section of the folded slip of paper

A glance at the accompanying illustration reveals the secret. Note that when the paper has been torn, every slip has one or more smooth edges, with the exception of the marked slip, which is *rough on every edge.*

The sense of touch does the rest. It is easy to discover the correct slip of paper by feeling the edges of each piece until the proper one is reached.

This is an improvement upon an old trick in which three slips of paper were used. The employment of nine slips makes the trick more effective and perplexing.

The Cards in the Match Box

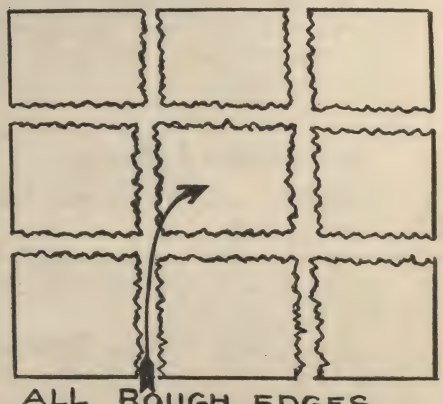
THIS trick requires a pack of toy cards, of the type known as "Little Dukes." Besides these, the performer has a match box partly filled with matches.

He empties the matches from the box, allows someone to shuffle the little cards, and then he puts the cards face down in the match box, closing the drawer.

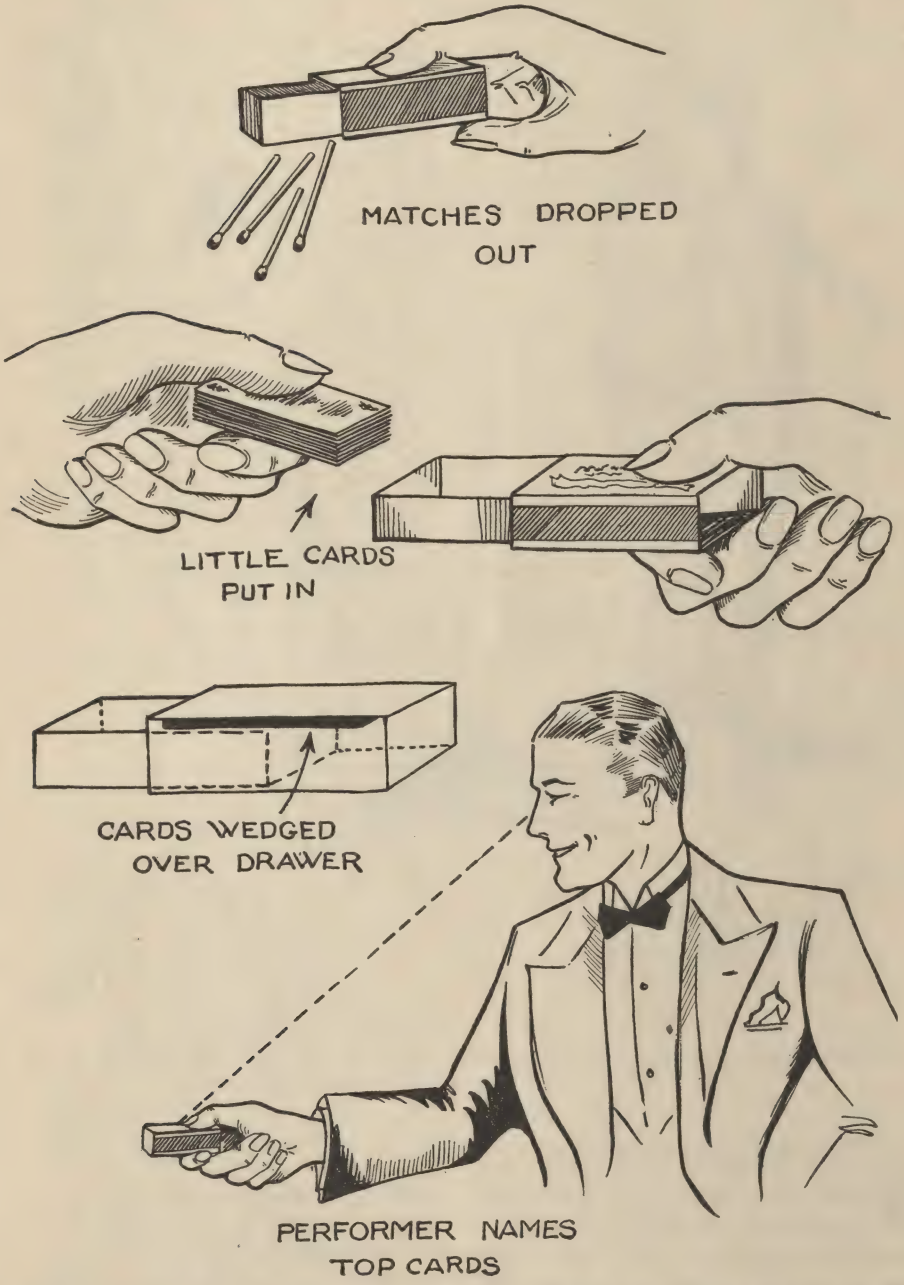
Touching the top of the match box, the performer names a card; then another; and so on, until he has called the names of half a dozen or more cards. The match box is opened, and the top cards of the pack are turned up one by one. They prove to be the very cards called by the performer!

The illustrations show the effect of the trick, and explain the method. The cards named are previously removed from the pack by the performer. The drawer of the match box is half opened, and the cards are wedged between the end of the drawer and the top of the box.

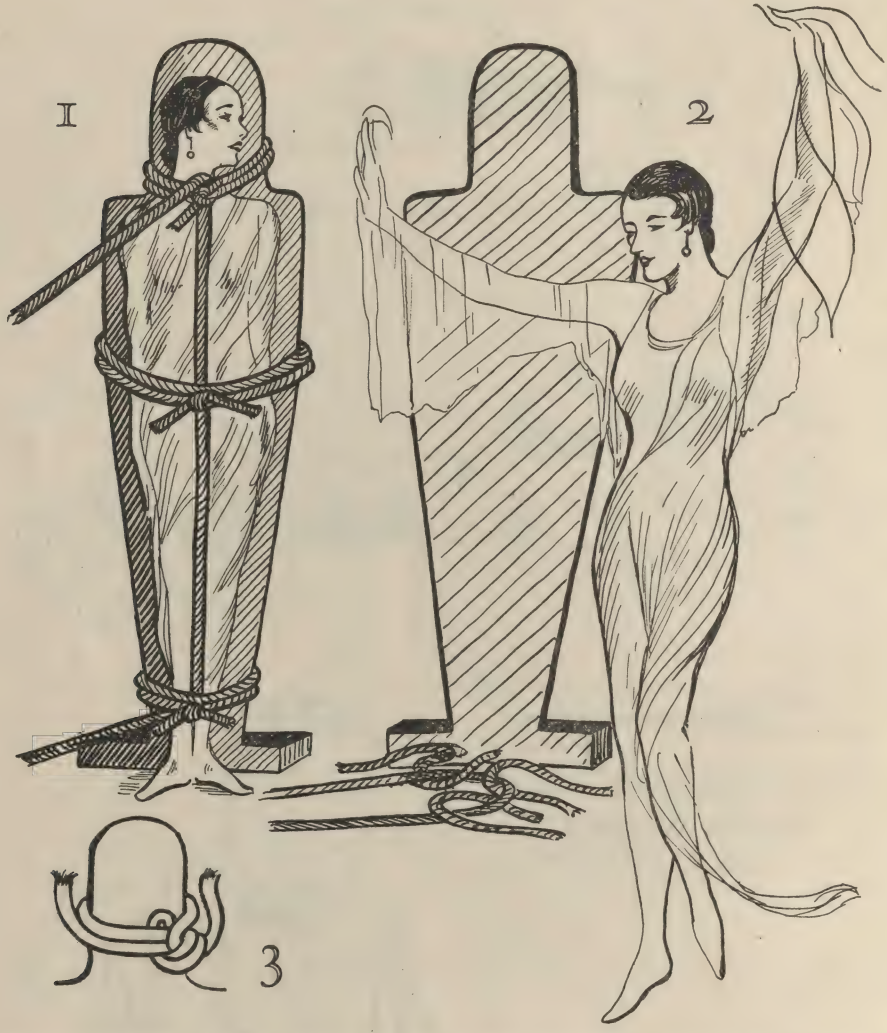
When the pack is put in the box and the drawer is closed, the known cards fall on top of the pack. The performer names them one by one and they are found to be the top cards when the box is opened.



How the torn paper appears



The magician empties the match-box and inserts the tiny cards face down. Note how the extra cards known to the performer) are wedged in the cover of the box. Reading the top cards then becomes an easy matter



The prisoner, bound with three ropes, escapes when the connecting cord is drawn away. The diagram (3) shows how each rope is doubled behind the board

The Released Prisoner

HERE is a rope mystery which the performer presents with the aid of a female assistant. The young lady stands with her back to a post, and the performer binds her there with three pieces of rope, wrapping each one twice around the post.

The ends of each rope are tied solidly. One rope encircles the girl's neck; another passes around her body; while the third holds her ankles.

Then the performer slips a long rope under the three ropes that hold the girl. Suddenly he pulls the long rope, and in the twinkling of an eye the girl

is free from the post, and the ropes drop to the floor!

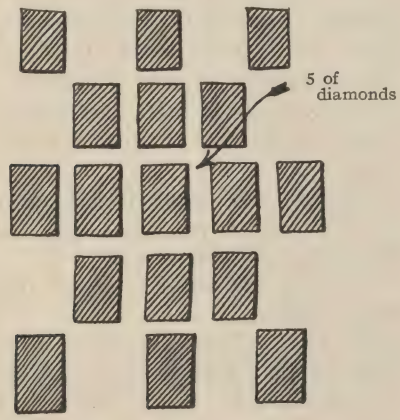
A rear view of the post explains the method. As he puts each rope around the girl, the performer stands in front of her and takes an end of the rope in each hand. As his hands reach the rear of the post, he does not cross the ends of the rope, but instead, he doubles back each end, slipping one loop through the other and twisting them so that they hold together. Then the ends of the rope are brought to the front and are tied.

The master rope is slipped in under one strand of each rope. The girl appears to be firmly bound, but a sharp pull on the master rope releases all the ropes, and the girl can immediately walk away from the post, while the tied ropes are all attached to the long rope pulled by the performer.

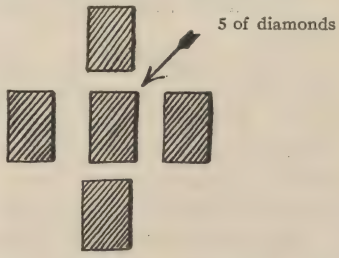
The Psychic Card Problem

THIS new and surprising card trick is performed with seventeen cards. It requires no skill, and may be learned by anyone. Let it appears to be a genuine feat of mind reading.

The person performing the trick lays seventeen cards in five rows, just as shown in illustration 1. He then writes a message on a piece of paper, and puts the paper in the case that held the pack of cards.



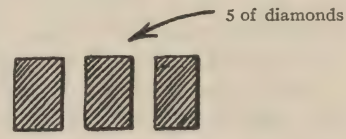
The original layout of seventeen cards. Note the position of the center card



The second layout, of five cards. The same card is in the center

"Now," states the performer, "I would like someone to select a row of five cards—either up and down, across, or diagonally. *I will use whatever row you choose.*"

There are several of these possible rows, and a spectator chooses one. The performer picks up the chosen row and asks the spectator to remove the others.



The final layout—three cards in a row

Then the performer lays the five chosen cards as shown in illustration 2. He states that he will use either row the person picks—either the three vertical cards or the three horizontal cards. A row is chosen, and the two extra cards are taken away.

The performer lays the three cards in a row, as shown in drawing 3, and asks the spectator which card he wants

the performer to take. The spectator points to a card. The performer turns it face up on the table. It is the five of diamonds. The piece of paper is removed from the card case, and it bears the words: "Five of Diamonds!"

This little mystery is easily accomplished.

Refer to illustration 1 and you will see that there are only four possible rows of five cards each. *The center card of each row* is the same, so no matter which row the spectator chooses, that card will be in it.

In illustration 2, the center card of the five cards used will be in either row that the spectator may choose.

The center card in the first layout is noted beforehand by the performer, and in this case it is the five of diamonds. So that is the name written on the slip of paper. In laying the five selected cards as shown in illustration 2 the performer takes care that the five of diamonds is again in the center, so it is one of the three cards that are finally chosen.

Those three cards are laid in a row as in illustration 3, the five spot being in the center. When the spectator is asked to take a card, he generally takes the middle one, and it proves to be the card named on the slip of paper.

If the spectator takes an end card, the magician can still succeed. He picks up the end card, leaving two, and says: "This is the card you wanted me to take. Which do *you take for yourself?*"

If the spectator takes the five of diamonds, the performer hands him the slip of paper, to compare with the card. If he does not take the five, the performer leaves the five on the table, points to it, and says:

"That is the only card left! You will find its name on the paper in the card case. One chance in seventeen; but I guessed it!"

THE BLACK PAGODA

(*Continued from page 42*)

"This," he enunciated slowly, "is the Palace of Laïla. It has remained intact since before the days of Akbar. Those priests whom you heard singing just now are the descendants of the original sect of Hatha-Yogi."

He turned to Swamindrath.

"If you still retain your interest in the occult sciences, you will learn a great deal from them. They have libraries here containing much of the knowledge of ancient Indian mysticism that we thought lost forever. To them the universe is but a stride and time does not exist. They spend their days in solitary contemplation and in the projection of their astral bodies into space."

He turned back to me.

Those are pheasant eggs," he said. "They were laid last night. I hope they are not boiled too hard for you."

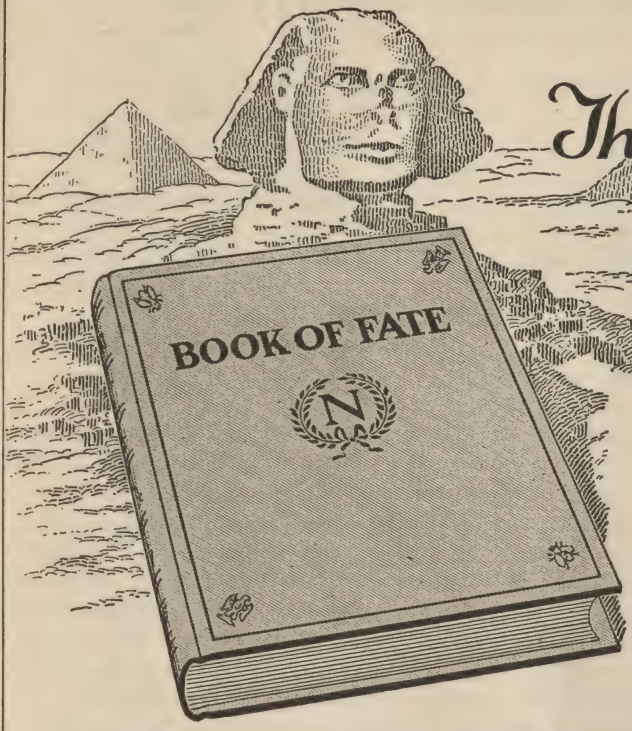
I muttered something about their being excellent.

"Personally," Captain Fitzpatrick went on as if we had just dropped into his club, "I have always been more interested in engineering than in mysticism. Since I have been here my pet project has been one for irrigating the desert. Immediately behind this palace is a deep ravine—the result of an earthquake in bygone centuries. Into this ravine now pour the waters that once made the entire valley fertile. . . ."

"Hold on," interjected Swamindrath. "Have you been kept here all this time as a prisoner?"

Captain Fitzpatrick faced him uncomfortably.

"I have often thought," he replied slowly, "that I might have escaped had I really tried. Since you ask me, I will confess that I have not wished to escape."



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He turned to me and his words trailed off into a whisper.

"She was so beautiful, you see . . ."

"Laïla?" I asked.

He nodded gravely.

"For eleven years," he announced with slow emphasis, "I have lived here as her husband."

THERE was silence for a moment. It was broken only by the sound of water splashing in the fountain. I understood Fitzpatrick's look of guilt now. His eyes were fixed miserably on mine.

"I suppose you have no news," he asked, "of my wife or son in England?"

I shook my head.

"Of course you wouldn't." He gazed straight ahead of him unseeingly for a minute. "But you can at least tell me what has been going on in the world since I went out of it."

I thought a moment.

"There has been a war," I announced.

His whole body became tense.

As I sketched for him in outline the significant facts of the world war I saw his nostrils dilate and the little network of veins stand out on his finely chiseled forehead.

"And my own regiment?" he asked breathlessly at last.

"Wiped out to the last man," I answered, "during the first year, in Flanders."

His face turned gray. It was drawn as if with pain and I saw that there were tears in his eyes. Abruptly he rose and raised his clenched fists toward the great dome above Laïla's palace.

"My God," he cried. "And I was not there! I am no better than a deserter!"

He collapsed into his chair and sat there for a moment with his head in both hands.

"Oh, my God!" I heard him mutter. "If only I could have fallen with them."

After a while he tried to draw himself together.

"Forgive me, gentlemen," he said. "You can't realize how this news affects me."

He turned and beckoned to the giant Yogi.

"This is Asokan," he informed us. "He is Laïla's steward and he will give you her orders. Now I must ask you to excuse me."

We rose to follow the Yogi. But as we left the courtyard I looked back.

Captain Fitzpatrick was standing beside the table. Upon his face was the look of humiliation and of pain that I had seen there when I told him his regiment had been wiped out.

Gravely he raised his right hand in military salute.

III

The Funeral Pyre

ASOKAN, the giant Yogi, conducted Swamindrath and me out again into the central court of the palace. Although the sun had scarcely risen its heat was already quite perceptible and the spray of the fountains felt pleasant as we passed them.

Immediately we entered the palace, however, the temperature dropped. It was like coming from blazing sunshine into the dark interior of a church. I have said that the palace was constructed for the most part of massive blocks of marble or of red sandstone from the desert. Now we were led through a labyrinth of halls, the floors of which were of black and white marble set in a curious mosaic.

After climbing an interminable flight of stairs we were ushered into two adjoining rooms that looked down

upon the central court. Here Asokan left us.

The rooms had the absolute simplicity of monks' cells. I noticed that Asokan had left the doors unlocked. Prisoners though we were, we were evidently to be allowed a certain freedom.

Swamindrath looked at me cautiously. I knew he would have liked to discuss the happenings of the last few hours. But the contempt for him that I had felt in the desert and my recent feelings of antagonism had by no means subsided. I could not forget the desperation of our struggle, nor the method by which he had attempted to subdue me.

"I'm going to sleep," I remarked curtly. I pulled off my boots and lay down upon the wicker couch.

The ordeal that I had gone through in the desert much have fatigued me more than I had realized, for it was dark when I awoke. I lay there for several minutes trying to collect my wits. Then I thought of Captain Fitzpatrick.

I was about to get up and go in search of him when I noticed a dull red light that flickered over the far wall of my room. It puzzled me for a minute. Then I realized that it came in through the window.

I sprang from my couch.

Below me the whole courtyard of the palace was alive with moving torches. The moon had not yet risen, but by the light of those torches I could see hundreds of white-robed priests scurrying about in what at first seemed meaningless activity.

Then I saw that some of them were carrying logs. These logs they bore to the center of the court where other priests seized them and piled them one upon the other. Higher and higher grew that pile. They were pouring the contents of huge vases upon it. All at once I realized its purpose.

A gong sounded. At once the feverish activity ceased. The priests formed in a huge circle about the funeral pyre. Save for their flaming torches and the strange shadow shapes that danced over the palace walls there was no movement in the whole vast courtyard.

Then, through the gate of jade, there came a weird procession: eight ghostlike priests who bore upon their shoulders a gleaming metal bier. Torches flamed at its four corners.

As it appeared, the whole assembly broke into a solemn, eerie chant.

As a boy of twelve I heard the dead march played for my own father. But never have I heard anything that so stirred me as the chanting of those priests. It brought tears into my eyes and sent icy chills along my spine. It reached into the very core of me and awoke emotions older than the race. It was terrible and beautiful, as magnificent as death.

It is impossible to describe my emotion. Ever since I had seen this palace in the first flush of dawn a feeling of unreality had possessed me. Having breakfast with a man whom I had mourned eleven years ago as dead had done nothing to dispel it. Now that feeling seemed to be growing stronger every minute.

I strained my eyes to see what sort of person lay upon the bier. But the light was too uncertain.

I felt an icy hand laid upon my arm. Swamindrath stood beside me.

"My God!" he whispered. "Oh, my God!"

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HOUDINI

(*Continued from page* 48)

"'Houdini, this is a foolish and dangerous stunt, and I should not allow it. It is not only dangerous to yourself, but also to the spectators. Before you begin, I want you to understand clearly that if anyone is hurt, I will hold you responsible!'

"You can imagine what chance he would have had of holding me responsible! If anything had gone wrong, he would have had to collect me first!"

THE MUMMY'S HAND

(*Continued from page* 21)

her, and in my uncertainty I am cruel. I cannot understand my feeling nor describe it, though I experienced it the first time we met. Now, in my later days, I fight it, for it doesn't seem sensible, but it's there—it's there." He tapped his chest in a puzzled sort of way.

The wondering, questioning look in his eyes got under my skin. I arose, trembling slightly.

"I've always hated the very look of her," he was muttering. "Ugly as sin. Mutilated. And yet——"

I left him thus, bowed over his empty glass mumbling about love.

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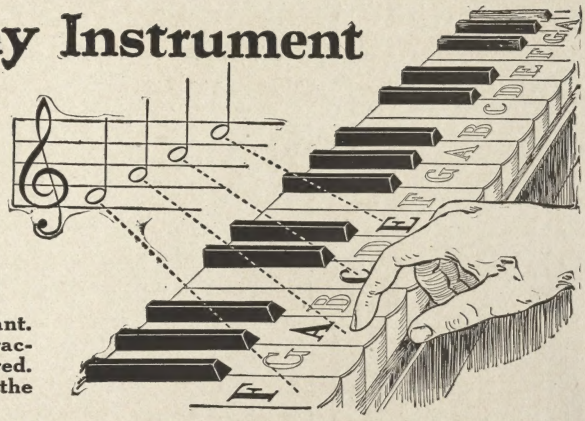

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